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CAPTAIN BAILEY DISCOVERED JOCKEY LEANING AGAINST A TREE AND WITH TEARS STEALING DOWN HER CHEEKS.

## THE MYSTERIOUS TENANT.

### [A NOVELETTE.]

#### CHAPTER I.

WHY it was ever called Myrtle Lodge puzzled some people, for there was not a single myrtle to be seen in its garden. The name Lodge was altogether too grand for the simple two-storied dwelling, which had only five rooms, and derived its charm from the large extent of ground by which it was surrounded, and its eligible position close to the gates of Nonsuch Park, as everyone knows the residence of Sir John Bailey.

Myrtle Lodge itself belonged to the baronet; the story went that it had been built two hundred years before for the special whim and pleasure of a certain Mistress Blanche Bailey, a noted Court beauty, who, losing her charms through a bad attack of small-pox, had desired to retire from

the world, and yet to end her days near Nonsuch Park.

Everything about the cottage bore out this statement. A high wall surrounded its grounds on three sides; on the other grew a close hedge equally impenetrable by the sharpest eyes; the gardens extended over four or five acres, so that they afforded ample exercise for a recluse. Often and often Sir John had talked of enclosing the Lodge, and its gardens, within the spacious demesnes of the Park, but when he came to the point he was stopped by a singular difficulty. His lawyer, better up in the family archives than himself, declared the thing was impossible. Mistress Blanche, an heiress in her own right, had built Myrtle Lodge with her private fortune, and bequeathed it by will to the owner of Nonsuch and his heirs on condition that it was maintained as a separate house. The moment any baronet attempted to pull down the cottage, or destroy the boundary between it and the Park, the tiny residence passed from him, and was to be sold by auction to the highest bidder.

"It is monstrous!" said Sir John, one night when the subject had been discussed; "the place is mine; why shouldn't I do as I please with it?"

The lawyer looked puzzled.

"The fact remains, Sir John, the moment you disobey your ancestress's will the property has to be sold, and the proceeds devoted to charity."

"It would never sell."

"I fear it will sell only too well; in fact, I know the site is coveted by the Governors of the County Asylum; they would pull down the cottage, rig up a huge, red brick building, and yet have plenty of ground left for the patients' exercise."

Sir John shuddered.

"Maniacs at my gate! No, anything but that; better let the poor old place keep its old shape. But I don't like it; it has been empty for years. It costs me a large sum to keep in repair. Altogether, Leslie, Myrtle Lodge is very like a white elephant to me."

"Why not advertise it!"

"It ought to bring in a hundred a year at the very least. That's what Colonel Laughton paid—a pleasant neighbour he was. I regretted his company, I think, more than his money."

"I have your consent then, Sir John, to advertise the property at once!"

"Yes; but I tell you beforehand there will be no answers to the advertisement."

But in four days' time Mr. Leslie returned to Nonsuch, and was duly ushered into the library.

Sir John started in surprise.

"Is there anything the matter, Leslie?"

"Nothing in the world, Sir John, except that I have found a tenant for Myrtle Lodge."

"Nonsense!"

"It is quite true, Sir John. I have come for your consent to the arrangement; I hardly liked to settle the matter off-hand."

"Who is it?"

"An elderly woman—a widow, I suppose. I told myself bound to point out to her the loneliness of the place, and the dull life she must perforce lead, but she seemed perfectly unimpressed. I told her she would move in to-morrow if I would let her."

"A respectable person, Leslie?" asked Sir John, a little cautiously.

"A staid, respectable, middle-aged widow," returned the lawyer; "her references are a well-known physician and a city banker."

"It sounds strange. A romantic young couple or a retired professional would have seemed to me more likely to appreciate Myrtle Lodge; middle-aged females don't generally admire such lonely dwellings."

"Well, Sir John, am I to complete the bargain? I am quite sure you would have a respectable tenant."

"And I have had such difficulty in getting a tenant at all that I must not be too fastidious. My wife and daughter will be disappointed; they had set their minds upon having such pleasant neighbours at the Lodge."

"The most I can say for Mrs. Robinson is that she would not be a disagreeable one."

"I suppose there is no necessity for me to see her?"

"Not the least in the world. Just give your written acceptance of her as a tenant, and the thing's done."

And Mr. Leslie returned to London with the written consent in his pocket, little reeking the storm of reproach which burst on Sir John's head when he told his wife and daughter of his new tenant.

"A middle-aged woman—not even a lady, papa!" said Blanche, disparagingly; "what can you have been thinking of!"

"I did hope if the dear old cottage was to be let we should find a friend in the tenant," said Lady Bailey, sadly. "John, you have no idea how we shall miss the garden—all the best fruit and flowers grow there!"

Poor Sir John!

"The place could not stand empty for ever, Lucy," he ventured to say in self-defence, "and I can assure you Mrs. Robinson is eminently respectable."

"Respectable!" echoed Blanche; "the word has such a prosy sound, papa. I daresay she is the widow of a retired butlerman, and drops her 'h's.' Shall we have to call on her, mamma?"

"Certainly not," replied her mother.

"I think it would be kind," said Sir John, simply; "you need not visit her repeatedly, but surely it can't hurt you just to spend five minutes in the drawing-room, and hear how she likes her new home."

"She will find it damp," said Blanche, wickedly; "respectable widows don't appreciate the delights of windows down to the ground, and rooms opening on to balconies."

The Baileys were a united family, but Sir John was just a little—one little shade, you know—bespeckled. He very rarely acted without asking his wife's advice; he had so acted in accepting Mrs. Robinson as a tenant, and my lady was not likely to forget it.

That alone would have prejudiced her against

the widow; but as the pulling down of the cottage and joining its gardens to the Park had been my lady's own pet scheme, she had an additional reason for disliking the unknown stranger.

Blymington was a small, sleepy place, and like most such villages, very much addicted to gossip. No one talked about anything except the servant at Myrtle Lodge; the clergyman's wife drove over to Nonsuch on purpose to ask if the new-comer was a Churchwoman, and if she had daughters of an age to be useful in school and parish.

Lady Bailey shook her head.

"I know nothing about her."

"She can hardly have many children," said Blanche. "You forget the size of the Lodge, Mrs. Fagan."

"But there are five rooms, besides the kitchen and outbuildings for the servants. I am quite anxious to introduce myself to Mrs. Robinson."

Lady Bailey looked a little put out.

"You will probably enjoy the monotony of her society," she said, coldly, "for I shall not think of calling."

"Not think of calling?" repeated the astonished rectress. "My dear Lady Bailey, why not?"

"I object to the whole affair."

And it came about that, as Lady Bailey was invariably put out when Myrtle Lodge was alluded to, people took to not mentioning it in her presence, and nothing more was said about Mrs. Robinson, until one morning about a fortnight later, to Blanche's surprise, the pew at church opposite their own, which had been empty for years, was occupied by a solitary figure in black.

Lady Bailey gave one glance at the stranger and returned her eyes—and let us hope her thoughts too—to her prayer-book. To her there was nothing interesting in the tall, portly form. Mrs. Robinson was well-dressed, though her black silk was of last year's date. She looked quite free from all pecuniary cares, and yet the fact was patent to the most careless observer—she was not a lady.

About fifty years of age, her face had a somewhat hard aspect; there were lines about her mouth telling of heavy sorrow, and the firm, plump hands had neither the whiteness nor the softness of Lady Bailey's.

Blanche Bailey, at eighteen, was romantic and highly imaginative, but even she could not make a heroine of Mrs. Robinson. The more she looked at her the more the doubt arose what in the world could have induced such a woman to select Myrtle Lodge as her residence!

I fear this question sadly disturbed Miss Bailey's devotion. The thought of Mrs. Robinson troubled her even through the sermon; and when she stood at her mother's side in the porch, waiting for their open carriage, her eyes still wandered to the black-robed figure.

She saw Mrs. Fagan go up to the new-comer and speak some words, perhaps of welcome, to her. Lady Bailey turned at that moment, and Blanche stepping to the place, overheard the whole of the conversation.

"I hope you are feeling settled in your new house, Mrs. Robinson? It is a pretty little place."

"Thank you kindly, ma'am, I'm sure. Yes, we're pretty well to rights."

"My husband is hoping to call on you shortly."

Mrs. Robinson flushed to the colour of a pomegranate.

"It's very good of the gentleman," said the new tenant, gratefully, "but I'm afraid I'd have no time."

"No time!" exclaimed Mrs. Fagan. "I had no idea you were so occupied."

"There's a deal to do at Myrtle Lodge," confessed the new tenant, simply, "and I don't hold with idle, tiresome girls—I never did."

Mrs. Fagan fairly gaped. Was the widow professing she did her own housework? She attempted to discover.

"I know of some excellent servants I should be most happy to recommend you."

"I prefer to be my own servant, ma'am," was the decided answer. "If you could tell me now of a respectable charwoman I'd thank you."

Miss Bailey was so impressed with this con-

versation that she repeated it in full for the benefit of her parents at luncheon. Lady Bailey tossed her head scornfully—poor Sir John looked troubled.

"What'll become of the garden if she keeps no servants? I think I'll go and call on her next week and see about it. I'd rather Andrews did a day's work there now and again than the place should go to rack and ruin."

"Take me with you, papa," pleaded Blanche. "Not with my consent," declared my lady.

However, as the baronet never refused his child a favour, it came about that the next time Lady Bailey had driven into town alone the two conspirators presented themselves at the gates of Myrtle Lodge.

"How strange it seems to ring, when we have been used just to turn the handle and walk in!" Sir John laughed.

"You couldn't turn the handle and walk in now, Blanche, even if Mrs. Robinson were your dearest friend. Just look at that iron padlock! I suppose the widow is afraid of thieves."

They waited fully five minutes and then rang again. At last a figure appeared slowly coming towards them, and Mrs. Robinson, clad in a homely print walking-dress, reached the gate, which she made no attempt to open.

"Good morning!" cried Sir John, in his hearty fashion. "We have just stepped round to bid you welcome to Blymington, and to ask if you find the house satisfactory."

The widow smiled slightly.

"It's as nice a house as you'd wish to see, Sir John. It suits me exactly."

The baronet and his daughter may be pardoned for the opinion which both secretly held, that however well Myrtle Lodge suited Mrs. Robinson, she herself seemed perfectly incongruous to the pretty homestead.

Sir John stood so evidently prepared to enter that Mrs. Robinson saw there was no help for it, and making a virtue of a necessity, she asked her visitors to come in.

It was just a month since the keys of Myrtle Lodge had been given up to Mrs. Robinson, and Sir John was prepared to see the gardens already showing signs of their neglected state.

He was mistaken. As they sauntered to the house he saw the flowers well cared for, their fresh dewy look testifying that though no rain had fallen for weeks, they had been carefully watered. The strawberry beds were netted, the lawn was smooth as velvet, and a rockery filled with chosen ferns was already in process of making.

The baronet was delighted.

"You must have a good gardener, Mrs. Robinson!"

"James Grover, Sir John. He seems to know his business pretty well."

He had been head gardener at the Park, only leaving because Lady Bailey in an economical fit, considered his subordinate, Roberts, could do the work at less expense. Certainly it was not pleasant to hear of Grover's skill as the property of this homely widow.

"A first-rate man, indeed," said Sir John, rather stiffly; "you were fortunate to secure him."

"He had a liking for the neighbourhood," said Mrs. Robinson, "and I won't deny he's useful. He brings all my marketing, does errands and the like, then he has a tidy piece of ground of his own to see to. He doesn't want to be always fidgeting here."

"Then you don't have the whole of his time?"

"I reckon I do, only I've a compact with him that he shall not be always about. I like to feel the place is my own."

They were in sight of the house now, a winding shrubbery surrounded it; in fact, the whole place was very like a maze. At a distance the shrubbery seemed one mass of leafy foliage.

There was an opening in only one place—to be discovered by the initiated easily enough, but a sore puzzle to outsiders. To Blanche's surprise a tiny wicket gate now stood at the entrance.

"I'm as timid as a kitten," remarked the widow; "I hate to be taken by surprise."





Evidently she had done her best to prevent such a catastrophe. She opened the wicket with a latchkey, and ushered her visitors into the larger of the two sitting-rooms with a little air of pride as she bade them welcome.

Blanche drew a long breath. She knew, of course, that alterations had been made at Myrtle Lodge, but she was quite unprepared for their nature.

The room that in Colonel Langton's time had seemed dark, almost gloomy, now rivalled fairy-land. The walls were coloured pale blue, and painted with delicate water-colours; the floor was stained, the centre only covered with rare Eastern rugs. Curtains of Mechlin lace draped the long windows, and a suite of pale blue satin seemed in keeping with the walls.

But anyone with money could have had these; it was the ornaments, the curios from foreign lands that told of the owner's taste and refinement. It seemed impossible that a common-minded person could have designed or carried out such a perfection of taste.

Sir John and his daughter sat down, and Mrs. Robinson, with a word of apology, vanished.

Blanche turned to her father with an eager whisper—

"Isn't it lovely?"

"My dear," said poor Sir John, fairly bewildered, "it must have cost hundreds."

Re-enter their hostess with a dish of freshly-gathered strawberries and a jug of cream. She pressed these delicacies on her guests, and they accepted, fearing to wound her feelings. Blanche was too full of curiosity to be silent.

"What a beautiful room you have made of this, Mrs. Robinson! I think I never saw such lovely old china."

"I am proud to hear you say so, Miss Bailey; some of it my master brought from Germany, the rest has been in the family for generations."

"Why did she say 'my master'?" asked Blanche, when they were clear of the lodge gates. It sounds just as though she were a servant."

"In that class of life women often call their husbands 'master.' Blanche, child, I don't like this mystery."

"What mystery, papa?"

"Mrs. Robinson."

"I'm sure she seems a nice, kind-hearted woman enough."

"The furnishing of that room must have cost hundreds, and—"

"You are getting afraid for your rent, Eh, papa?"

"Nonsense, Percy. Only I can't reconcile myself to think of that woman as mistress of such a home."

"Don't let's tell mamma," suggested Blanche, "she would look upon poor Mrs. Robinson as something terribly wicked at once."

So the days passed on.

Sir John and his daughter never spoke of their visit to Myrtle Lodge, but by degrees they learned that they were the only people who had ever been allowed to enter it. Mrs. Fagan was in great indignation; she and her husband had both called at different times, and been refused admission. The gardener, who opened the gate, had told them simply Mrs. Robinson saw no visitors. They had asked to be allowed to stroll round the grounds, and admire the beautiful flowers, but James Grove was inexorable.

Other people had tried to cultivate the widow; the doctor's wife, the lawyer's wife, and such-like matrons had followed the example of the lady rectresses with precisely the same result.

"It is too bad," Mrs. Fagan confided to Blanche Bailey, when the latter was at the Rectory to discuss some arrangements for a school-meet to be held in Nonsuch Park; "she's nothing but a common woman. What right has she to give herself airs?"

"I don't think she means to," said Blanche, deprecatingly; "perhaps she really has some reason for not wishing to know people."

Mrs. Fagan sniffed.

"And then her whole conduct is so eccentric. She says she can't afford a servant; and yet she

has a first-class gardener and pays him a good price."

"But Grove has ground of his own to cultivate now, so perhaps she pays him less, and he works shorter hours."

"Nothing of the sort, Miss Bailey. His sister is my housemaid, and so I know all about it. She pays him the same as your father did, and twenty pounds a year extra in consideration of his doing all her shopping."

"Then she can't be poor."

"Poor! I expect she's a miser."

"She has not been to church for some weeks. I hope she is not ill."

"Edgar made just that same remark yesterday. I said it didn't much matter, but he would walk over and inquire."

"And did he go in?"

"Not a bit of it. Grove opened the gate and said there was nothing the matter. I told Edgar in future I should leave Mrs. Robinson alone."

The door opened abruptly, and the rector entered—a complete contrast to his wife, a simple, earnest man, with a quiet, good face. He shook hands.

"I just came to tell you something that will interest you, Mary," he said, blithely to his wife. "You know the debt of fifty pounds still owing on the organ?"

Did she not know it! Had it not taken her best efforts for eighteen months to make the debt even as low as that? Had she not solicited subscriptions, sold fancy things, got up raffles, and then, in the end, found herself still with this awful weight of fifty pounds owing, and the moral certainty that in the course of time her husband would have to defray it out of his slender income.

Her face brightened perceptibly.

"Ah, I know you had a letter this afternoon. Someone has sent you a guinea towards it," and she thought forty-nine pounds sounded far less than fifty, and was comforted accordingly.

"I don't think I should have disturbed you to tell you that, Mary. I have just received a cheque for fifty pounds, to use for any parochial purpose I please."

Mrs. Fagan's face grew radiant.

"Oh, Edgar!"

"Who can it be?" asked Blanche Bailey, excitedly.

"Mr. Fagan, I am delighted."

The three, indeed, seemed intensely pleased. It would have done the donor good to see their happy faces.

"I wanted papa so much to send it," said Blanche, wistfully; but he said he could not afford it."

"Sir John has been very liberal already," replied the rector. "Come, Mary, won't you guess our friend's name?"

"I can't, Edgar; I am quite at a loss."

"Perhaps you'll want me to send it back," said Mr. Fagan, archly. "It comes from Mrs. Robinson."

"Mrs. Robinson!"

"And this note inside. Mary, I think we have misjudged her. Listen!"

"DEAR SIR,—I was much grieved that you should have taken such a long walk in the heat yesterday on my account. I hope in the course of a few weeks to be able to get to church again. Unfortunately, I am unable to receive visitors at home, although it has been a real sorrow to deny myself to you and Mrs. Fagan. Perhaps you will let me contribute the enclosed towards any parochial expense you judge best. If you would send me a list of the village charities I should be happy to subscribe to them. Very many trials have been my portion, but poverty has never touched me.—Yours faithfully,

"MARTHA ROBINSON."

There was a dead pause when the rector had finished reading. Blanche broke in,—

"She can't be a bad woman. Don't you think it may be just as she says—she has had heavy troubles, and so does not care for society?"

"I will never say another word against her," rejoined Mrs. Fagan, penitently.

Blanche Bailey went home full of Mrs. Robinson's generosity, but she found Nonsuch Park

almost wild with excitement on account of her brother's return, and so she had to postpone her story to a more convenient season.

Captain Bailey was seven-and-twenty—a handsome, high-spirited young man; the darling of both his parents, and the special champion of his sister, who, nine years his junior, had been apt to look up to him as a superior being.

He had been absent from home three years, and in them Blanche had grown from a child to a woman.

He thought his pretty sister a very fascinating girl, and Blanche was delighted with her soldier-brother.

"You must welcome a friend for my sake, Blanche," he said, fondly. "My fellow-officer, Captain Desmond, will be here next week."

Lady Bailey was delighted. Captain Desmond was brother to an earl, and had saved Jocelyn's life—two very strong claims on her good-will.

"I wonder his brother can spare him so soon, though!" she said, when they were discussing the guest's advent.

"His brother is in no condition for society, even Reginald's; he has lost his wife."

"Lost his wife!"

"How sad for him to be a widower," remarked my lady; "he must be quite a young man."

"It's a miserable history altogether," explained Jocelyn. "She was very beautiful, and they were married in a great hurry abroad. He brought her to England after the honeymoon, and in three days she disappeared. He hushed it up as well as he could. The servants think she's abroad for her health. As a fact, he has no idea where she is—alive or dead, he knows not. He cannot even tell if he be husband or widower."

"How awful!"

"Aye, the news cut Rex up awfully—they had been so much together, he and his brother. They are just of an age, and as Rex has his mother's fortune, and the family property is much encumbered, they were almost equal in the matter of means."

So, as Reginald Desmond had no portionless younger son, my lady decided to give him all time and opportunity to fall in love with her daughter, Blanche Bailey.

It sounded well, and if the poor Earl succumbed to his grief and troubles, why, her child might be a countess.

No one mentioned Myrtle Lodge that evening.

When the ladies had retired, after a short chat with his father, Jocelyn Bailey went out for a stroll in the park.

It was August; the harvest moon was at the full, and bathed in its soft splendour Nonsuch Park looked strangely lovely.

Jocelyn wandered on and on until he stood by the tall hedge which divided his father's grounds from the gardens of Myrtle Cottage. He stood still for a moment, struck by the beauty of the scene, and then a sweet, rich voice fell upon his ear.

"Oh! love for a year, a week, a day, but alas! for the love that loves away."

The voice was clear and sweet; the accent good. He knew the singer must be a gentlewoman; but what gentlewoman would be wandering alone at eleven o'clock at night?

Captain Bailey was not to be fooled; he meant to see what kind of face went with the voice that had enthralled him.

He was slim and active. He sprang into a tree that stood close to the hedge, clambered up its branches, until he could command a view over half of the Lodge grounds, and this is what he saw.

A girl, apparently about twenty, in a soft white dress, a sky-blue cloak wrapped over her head. She had a mignon face, framed with curling hair of a golden brown, little curls clustered on her forehead; her dark eyes were fringed by long black lashes, which contrasted with the delicate beauty of her complexion; the eyes had a strange, wistful expression; the smile had in it more of resignation than of mirth. It was the loveliest face that Jocelyn had ever seen, and yet he knew by intuition it was not a happy one. Who was she—that fair, lonely girl? and why

did she wander by herself in those moonlit grounds? Her dress, her bearing, the lily whiteness of her hands, bold of gentle birth, and yet what high-born mother would let her child ramble alone near midnight?

A moment's doubt, just a tinge of conscience to remind him he was trespassing, and Jocelyn Bailey had scaled the wall, and stood in the garden only a few paces removed from the song-stress.

He wished she would turn and see him. He had no idea what excuse he should make for his presence, only he wanted to see those lovely eyes looking at him, to hear that voice addressed to him, but she did not gratify the desire of which she was unconscious. She seemed too wrapped in her own thoughts to have noticed his arrival. She flung herself into a low chair, pushed one hand rapidly across her brow, and murmured sorrowfully,—

"How is it to end?"

She must have spoken aloud without knowing it. She sat there a few moments in blank despair, and then an old woman came from the house, and laid one hand upon her shoulder.

"It's late, my dearie, and you'll be taking cold; you'd better come in."

The girl shook her head.

"It is so beautiful here. Goody, why shouldn't I stay? I can forget the trouble here—I don't have to hide myself now. I can feel the fresh air blow upon my temples, and smell the sweet scent of the flowers. I don't forget, Goody; I never can forget, but it makes the pain easier to bear."

Inexpressibly grieved and bewildered Jocelyn watched the two turn towards the house, the woman and the girl. He could see nothing of the latter's form, so closely was she shrouded in the blue shawl; but her face he felt he should remember through all time.

Many a young man would have made inquiries of his family as to who were the tenants of Myrtle Lodge. Jocelyn did nothing of the sort. He made no allusion whatever to his nocturnal adventure; he never mentioned Myrtle Lodge, but he asked Blanche at breakfast what young lady friends she had, and if any of them were new-comers since he went to India.

Her answer told him he could not hope to get an introduction to the beautiful stranger from his sister.

"I have hardly a girl-friend in the place, Jocelyn—actually I don't believe there is a young lady under five-and-twenty except myself."

"And I suppose you know all the visitable young ladies near here?"

"Oh, dear, yes; there is not a house my pony is not familiar with for miles round."

"Except Myrtle Lodge," said the mother, gravely.

"We won't discuss Myrtle Lodge," put in the baronet, cheerfully; "it's your mother's pet aversion just now, Jocelyn, though as its only tenant by a middle-aged widow of irreproachable character I can't think why."

Jocelyn understood as well as if he had been told. The old servant he had seen passed in the village as the mistress of Myrtle Lodge, and the very existence of the beautiful songstress was unexpected.

He haunted the grounds at night, he spent hours in the old oak tree, but he was not rewarded by another sight of the lovely unknown. At last he began to think the whole affair must have been a dream, or he might have thought so had he not set out on a journey to the next town about four days after his return on a very threatening afternoon, when Blanche and her mother declared there would be a thunder-storm.

He had made his purchases, accomplished his mother's commission, and was thinking of returning, when, suddenly walking about the sleepy High-street, he came face to face with the object of his thoughts.

She was dressed in soft grey cashmere, her white straw hat was trimmed with soft lace and forget-me-nots, but there was a nameless elegance about the whole. Jocelyn knew he could not be mistaken in her, but what could have

brought her here? He knew she had not been shopping, for she came from the field entrance to the town. Suddenly the truth flashed upon him—she had walked the six miles from Myrtle Lodge, and this was her entrance into the town.

He watched her. It may seem dishonourable, but he could not bear to lose sight of her. How slowly and how wearily she walked, as though her strength was already overtaken! Jocelyn, at a little distance, kept her steadily in view until she entered the post-office. It flashed upon him then that Reddie was the nearest telegraph station to Blymington.

He followed her into the shop, a fancy repository, and began purchasing the first thing he saw on the counter, while she advanced to the desk and wrote her message. The hand with which Captain Bailey was receiving his change shook a little, as the clerk (after a fashion rather prevalent in small rustic telegraph offices) read aloud the message to make sure he had it correctly.—

"Martha Robinson, Myrtle Lodge, in Blymington, to Dr. Armitage, Savile-row:—Come at once, lose not an hour."

The message filled Jocelyn with surprise. He knew Dr. Armitage as a physician of world-wide fame, whose minutes were productive of golden results. To summon him to a remote village in Blankshire, save for a dangerous case, seemed impossible, and he knew perfectly there was no case of dangerous illness at the Lodge.

The girl evidently felt sure of the physician's compliance; there was a sense of relief about her every movement, even in the way she closed the door of the little shop, and turned back towards Blymington.

But she was spent and tired. Jocelyn, who watched her, saw that the trembling feet could hardly support her. He was longing to offer her assistance, when a friend came up, and claimed his attention for a few seconds, finally departing with the remark,—

"I shall not see much of you when Desmond comes, I expect!"

Jocelyn's beautiful unknown had been within a stone's throw during this conversation. Free of his friend, Captain Bailey walked on to discover the girl leaning against a tree, sob almost convulsively; her slight frame, the tears stealing down her cheeks.

Jocelyn took her hand.

"I am quite sure you are worn out," he said, gently. "The walk has been too much for you."

"The walk!"

"I cannot be mistaken. You are a near neighbour of mine. You live at Myrtle Lodge."

The girl trembled like an aspen leaf.

"Oh, never tell anyone," she pleaded. "I can't think how you found it out, but you look kind and pitiful. Perhaps you have sisters of your own at home; for their sakes promise that you will not betray me."

Troubled by her emotion Jocelyn conquered his own.

"I never betrayed anyone in my life," he answered. "You may trust me entirely."

"How did you find it out?"

"Find out what?"

"That I, we, lived at Myrtle Lodge."

"I am Sir John Bailey's son."

She started.

"Sir John is good and kind; but, oh! the secret would not be safe with him. You must not tell him."

"I will tell him nothing, but I was going to explain. Some nights ago I was in the garden, and I heard a voice singing."

"A voice singing!" and a pained look crossed her face. "Ah, I have often feared that was dangerous, but then the singer has so few pleasures."

Of course she meant herself, but it seemed strange she should use the third person.

"You will pardon my curiosity," went on Jocelyn, "but I had no thought of wrong. The voice had touched me more than I could tell you. I wanted to see the owner of those sweet tones. I clambered into a tree that overlooks the garden of Myrtle Lodge, and I saw—"

"Hush!" she murmured, "for the love of Heaven, sir, be silent."

"But there is no one to hear us," pleaded Jocelyn. "I saw you, you were paler than you are now, but I could not be mistaken it was your face I saw, your voice I heard."

She does not contradict him; indeed, a look of relief crosses her face.

"And you will keep my secret?"

"As my own. I gather the truth, the Mrs. Robinson, who passes for the mistress of Myrtle Lodge, is your servant; she does but guard the real lady of the land."

The girl blushed.

"I cannot tell you."

"I am not inquisitive, only," here his deep voice almost broke with emotion, "a strange chance first showed me your face, a strange one has brought us together to-day. Don't you blush; we might be friends."

The girl shook her head.

"I can have no friends."

Jocelyn never wavered from his purpose.

"I will never seek to know the secret of your life," he protested; "no word of mine shall reveal that Myrtle Lodge holds any other inmate than Mrs. Robinson. I will be true as steel if only you will trust me."

She hesitated.

"It would be cruel to take you at your word. You don't know how deeply shadowed my life is—how little of confidence or trust I could offer even to a friend."

Jocelyn hurried on.

"Promise me."

"I cannot."

"For your own sake," he pleaded, "for your secret's sake, don't you think a man's strong arm, a man's true heart, would be of any service to you?"

"I don't believe in men!"

Her voice had once more the sorrowful cadence in which so brief a space before she had told her nurse she could never forget.

Jocelyn watched her anxiously.

"Why?"

"They are all false."

"Have you tried one?"

She shook her head.

"My father died when I was ten years old. I never had a brother; I spent all my youth in a French convent. It is only a few months since I came out, and in them I have never spoken so long to any man as I have to you, but I distrust all men, I could not help it."

"Distrust them all!" said Jocelyn; "let me be the exception!"

"You!"

"Yes, look on me as a friend."

"I need no friends."

"I think you do. Shall I tell you now you need a friend, even at this moment?"

"Yes."

"You are tired to death, the heat is overpowering; you are not fit to walk one mile, much less six! Let me drive you home to Blymington!"

He had an abler advocate than his words. While they were speaking a few drops of rain had fallen, now a drenching torrent came down. They were standing in an open field, no shelter; the pitiless rain poured down upon them, wetting the girl's soft dress through and through, chilling her very bones, but she bore up bravely. It was only when the lightning swept in flashes across the sky that she looked terrified; her courage gave way then, she buried her face in her hands.

"There is nothing to fear," said Jocelyn, gently; "the storm is almost over now. In a few minutes the rain will have stopped, and I can drive you home."

"It is very foolish, but I am always frightened of the thunder."

"It is not foolish; the fear of thunder is constitutional to many people."

"I was always frightened at the convent," she said, simply; "the nuns used to tell me it was because I was so wicked."

"Nonsense!" he said, almost roughly; "I am quite sure you were never wicked in your life."

She shook her head.

"I think I must be, for I am very unhappy."



The storm has ceased now, Captain Bailey, I can go home."

"You cannot walk to Blymington. If you will allow me I shall be very glad to drive you home."

"But you have friends with you; I heard a gentleman say so just now."

"Ah! Captain Desmond, but he isn't here now. I don't expect him till next week."

"It is a pretty name. I thought, though, that Mr. Desmond was a lord."

Jocelyn laughed.

"But this is his younger brother."

"Ah!"

But for the impossibility of the thing, Jocelyn would have said she seemed as one relieved from a mortal dread. Very gently he persuaded her to accompany him for the short distance that separated them from the solitary confectioner's of Riddle.

He ordered tea and coffee, and then left her to seek his phaeton, and dismiss the groom who had driven him over.

"I shall not wait you, Reynolds. I mean to drive home myself."

Reynolds did not appreciate the prospect of walking the six miles to Blymington and put on a most injured expression of face, but Jocelyn paid no attention. He took the reins, whistled to the gallant grey, and in five minutes drew up before the confectioner's.

His passenger seemed to have gained all hearts. The proprietress of the shop came out to wrap her warmly in a thick shawl, for the air was damp and heavy after the storm. The assistant was all smiles and beams; and the child of the house, a sly boy of ten, stood offering a hastily-culled posy of flowers from his own bouquet.

"Children always love me!" she said, simply, when Jocelyn rallied her on the dandelions and buttercups in the nosegay. "I suppose they know I am fond of them. Some day I shall go back to my convent and see all the little ones again."

"Not to stay!" exclaimed Jocelyn, horror-struck. "I can never believe you would choose such a life."

"I would not become a nun," she agreed, "because I have no vocation for it, but I would like dearly to go back to the convent. It was such a peaceful, happy life, and the little children loved me so."

"You will find plenty of people to love you here."

She did not contradict him, only there was no look of brightness in her face as there had been when she spoke of the convent and the little children.

Jocelyn felt at a loss. He wanted to know more of her, and yet it was difficult to ask questions, lest she should deem him inquisitive.

"Shall you stay long at Myrtle Lodge?"

"I don't know. As long as I am wanted, Captain Bailey, my life is not my own. I cannot spend it as I like. It has all to be devoted to one purpose."

"And one person," he said, jealously.

"Yes," agreed the girl, simply, "and to one person."

"And yet you don't believe in men."

For a moment she almost smiled.

"You could not think I meant a lover—why, I never thought of such a thing! Never once in all my life."

"Because you are a child."

"I am not a child."

"I think so."

"I am one-and-twenty," she said, gravely, "and oh! it seems sometimes as if I were an old woman."

They were nearing Blymington. Another five minutes and this strange, sweet intercourse would be over.

"Will you promise to look on me as a friend?" once again pleaded Jocelyn.

"I will promise never to forget your kindness," she answered, simply.

"And you will let me help you whenever you stand in need of help?"

"I think not."

"Why not?"

"You are young," she said, speaking as though

she had been years older than him, instead of considerably his junior. "You are just beginning life free and unfettered. You ought not to know anything of such a sorrow as weighs on us!"

"I might help to lift the burden."

"Nothing could do that, the past is past, Captain Bailey; not the mines of Klondyke can undo it."

"Then your sorrow is in the past!"

"In the past, the present, and the future. The germ of it all happened not quite a year ago. Fancy, eleven months ago I was happy in my convent, little recking the blow that was to fall."

"Tell me at least one thing," he implored her. "I shall never forget you—never while I live. Surely you will let me know by what name I may recall you!"

She flushed crimson, and he hastened to add,—

"Why not the name you bear in the world you are hidden from? Tell me what you were called at the convent by the little children who loved you!"

He had guessed her difficulty, and she smiled in gratitude.

"They did not like my name, it was so English. They used to call me June, because my birthday came in the month of flowers. It was a pretty idea, and I liked it. Think of me as June, Captain Bailey, the name I bore when my life was as free and careless as a little bird's—when safe inside the convent's walls I knew nothing of the misery and wickedness, the cruelty and wrong that went on in the great vortex men call the world."

They were at the Lodge gates. Jocelyn assisted her to alight, whispering,—

"I shall never forget to-day, and I shall think of you as June."

## CHAPTER II.

JUNE—for we will act as Captain Bailey and call her at present by the name she best loved—did not wait for admittance; she produced a small latch-key from her pocket, opened the door, and entered the grounds of Myrtle Lodge as one well used to the place. She threaded the mossy labyrinth and arrived at last at the steps leading to the door.

Hushing her footfall by instinct, she crept noiselessly up these. The door was open. June went to her own room, threw off her wet clothes, and dressed herself in a loose, white robe bound round the waist by a blue ribbon. She put on a pair of thin, red slippers, and so, attired that her movements could cause neither noise nor annoyance to the most sensitive ear, she went back to the drawing-room.

She sat down by the window and leant her little head wearily against the pane of glass. She was tired in body, tired in mind; her very heart seemed near to breaking.

"If only she had been with me," murmured June, "I think I would have saved her. Oh, my darling! don't you know June would give her life and happiness just to bring back yours!"

Poor June! Such a little of home life had been hers. On her father's death she had been adopted by her mother's brother, an eccentric millionaire, who not knowing what to do with a child placed her in a convent abroad.

A year after he died, leaving the strange proviso that his niece was to reside entirely at the convent until she attained the age of twenty-one; her future then was at her own disposal and her immense fortune also.

The latter had increased during a long minority, so that at twenty-one June found herself possessed of thousands a-year.

But the girl had no desire to leave the shelter of the convent; the life there suited her.

She might have ended her days in that quiet retirement but for an awful trouble, which seemed to sap the very foundations of her life, and sent her to England as fast as steamer and train would take her.

Poor June! Beautiful as was that drawing

room there was something lonesome even in its beauty.

Everything that money could purchase, or taste desire, was there, but money and taste are not all-powerful; there was not one happy memory connected with the room. Ever since she came to Myrtle Lodge June could not recall one happy hour.

Till now! The remembrance of Captain Bailey's kindness, of his gentle, chivalrous tenderness, came to the lonely maiden again and again, and comforted her almost in spite of herself.

True she did not believe in men, that she had been taught at the convent they were all bad, but still June was disposed to make an exception in favour of her hero.

"And he thought it was I he heard singing," she murmured. "Goody ought to know that it would make her more careful. Well,"—and the girl smothered a choked sob—"she is not likely to sing out-of-doors by moonlight again yet awhile, poor darling."

And though this speech might imply the elderly Mrs. Robinson had been guilty of this strange whim, and that it was the old nurse whom June addressed as "poor darling," as a fact both these implications would be very far from the truth.

The girl sat on for hours, till the gathering darkness gave her a chill, weird sensation; she grew nervous and fainful.

At last she started up and lighted some wax candles, which stood in a silver candelabra on a table near her; the soft light banished the shadows on the wall, and dispelled a little of the gloom at June's heart. She was just going to take up a book when the supposed owner of the house, Mrs. Robinson, appeared.

"Oh, my dear, I have been that anxious about you!" she began. "I thought you'd catch your death of cold in that rain, and come home dead-beat."

Was it wrong of June that she suppressed all mention of Captain Bailey? She trusted him so entirely—she felt he would never betray their meeting; and she had good reasons for not wishing the story of her drive to get to Mrs. Robinson's ears, it would but have increased the fears which haunted the widow.

"I was tired," she admitted, frankly, "and damp, too; but I changed my things, and came here to rest. Goody, how is she!"

"Just the same, my dear."

"I sent off the telegram."

"He'll be here to-morrow, miss; and now I'll see to getting you a bit of supper. You must be faint."

"Shall I go and sit with her?"

"No, my dear, it's no fit place for you; and Miss Nell's off her head. She wouldn't know you; she's just dropped into a kind of troubled sleep, poor dear!"

With a tender care and yet a marked respect Mrs. Robinson prepared the supper she had spoken of.

June smiled faintly, and took a wing of cold chicken on her plate, but it was plain she was too tired and sad to eat.

"What's upset you, miss?" asked the old nurse, gently. "It's not the old trouble only that's pressing on you to-night."

"I think it is."

"And nothing else?"

"It seems heavier sometimes than others, Martha. Besides all the sadness of it, there's the disgrace!"

The servant flushed crimson; she seemed for a moment almost angry with June.

"There's a many 'd be ready to call her trouble by that name, my poor lamb!—but not you, Miss June, not you. I can't a-bear to hear the word coming from your lips."

June hid her face with her hands.

"I am not thinking only of Nell," she said, faintly. "Goody, I am afraid I'm getting selfish. I was thinking of myself."

"Yourself, Miss June!"

"Mine will be a banned life as well as Nell's! Goody, I am so tired of all these shifts and concealments! It's weary work, hiding under a name that's not your own, and being afraid of every stranger's face. Goody, must it go on!"

"It is hard for you," confessed Goody; "but think of her suffering, Miss June! Yours is nothing to it."

"I know, I know; only Nell had just a taste of happiness—the knew what pleasure meant. What I want to say, Goody, is, when Nell gets well, couldn't we all go away, and live openly somewhere? England is such a big place, Goody, surely somewhere we can find a place where we should be safe from him?"

"I'll think of it, Miss June; and maybe you'll speak to Armitage, my dear."

June sighed.  
The next day Goody seemed possessed but of one desire—to get June out of the house. She who had hitherto kept the girl almost a prisoner, for fear of being seen, now had but one desire to get her away.

"After all, Miss June," she said, slowly, "you're nothing to do with all the misery of it. If you met him, even, you could prove to him you had never seen his face before. I think we've made a mistake, my dear. You're getting pale and thin. Go out a bit, and if anyone asks who you are, you can up and tell them you are Mademoiselle de Juvencal, and that you're come here on a long visit."

She had read the girl's heart aright. The long course of concealment, the hiding from her fellow-creatures had been too much for June. She was growing weak and ill.

So June took Goody at her word, dressed in the pretty cambric which had been the summer comforter.

At the convent mademoiselle walked across the fields to the village. It was a saint's day, and the bell was chiming for service.

June went in. She had not been inside a church since she left France, and the very quietness of the place was a relief to the overcharged heart.

Of the few worshippers not one of them so thoroughly lifted their hearts in prayer as June.

She was coming slowly out, lingering in the chancel, to look at the peaceful graves, when she came face to face with Mr. and Mrs. Fagan.

They had both remarked the beautiful young stranger, and resolved to speak to her. The clergyman began by asking if she were a stranger in Blymington.

"Yes; I am staying with Mrs. Robinson."

Mrs. Fagan said a few words of gratitude for Mrs. Robinson's munificence; then she hoped that lady was in better health.

Goody had never said anything in her life. June could only say that Mrs. Robinson was much the same.

"And are you making a long stay here?"

"I shall stay as long as Mrs. Robinson does."

"She is, in a sort of way, my guardian."

They were at the Rectory gate. Mrs. Fagan begged June to come in and rest.

"You look so tired."

"I shall be very pleased," thinking what a relief it would be to see the inside of some other house than Myrtle Lodge, "but I ought to introduce myself to you. I am Rosamond de Juvencal."

The "de" impressed Mrs. Fagan very much; the Rector only said, kindly,

"I can hardly believe you are not English."

"I am English!" said June, with a blush,

"at least half. My mother was French, and when my father died the family adopted me, and made me take their name. I don't mind; I spent a very happy childhood in France, and my name reminds me of it."

The children's couple were delighted with June.

Mrs. Fagan had just begged her to stay to lunch when a servant announced Captain and Miss Bailey.

Blanche responded warmly to the introduction; Jocelyn almost crushed the little fingers in his grasp, and whispered so as to be only heard by her,

"A little guessed what pleasure was in store for me."

They spent a delightful morning. The three

young people lunched at the Rectory, then Blanche had to consult Mrs. Fagan on parish business, and departed Jocelyn to escort Mademoiselle de Juvencal home.

"You are very silent," he told her, as they passed out at the Rectory gates.

"I am afraid to speak to you."

"Afraid!"

"You must think me so deceitful."

"Why?"

"I told you last night my very name must be a secret, that the fact of my being in the neighbourhood must be kept sacred."

"I am sure you told me nothing you did not believe."

"Oh, nothing!"

"Then why?"

"I will tell you! I was so sad last night; I told Goody I thought this life of deceptions and mysteries was killing me, that I had no heart to wish for life. She loves me very much. She told me this morning she thought I might and the concealment; that Blymington would trouble itself very little about me, that even if the worst happened, and our enemy discovered us, he would never connect Rosamond de Juvencal with the girl he sought."

"And your name is Rosamond?"

"Yes, but I like June best."

"So do I!"

"How pretty your sister is!" said June, simply; "and how happy she seems! Do you know I have not seen anyone so bright since I left the convent?"

"I don't think Blanche has ever known a sorrow."

"Is she engaged to be married?"

"No; men don't often go in for match-making, but I have one darling ambition for my sister. I want her to marry my dearest friend, Captain Desmond."

"And will she?"

"They have never seen each other."

And then he fell to telling June of his Indian life and his profession. The girl listened with deep, intense and ready sympathy.

"How they must have missed you—your people, I mean—while you were in India?"

"I think they did. Well, I have a year's leave now."

"And then shall you return?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know?"

"It does not depend upon me."

"Oh, upon your father?"

He could not venture to tell her his future depended on himself, so he only answered,—

"The governor wants me to sell out and go into Parliament. He says I am old enough now to settle down."

"And shall you?"

"I don't know."

"I should like to be a soldier!" said June, dreamily. "And yet I don't know; fighting is very fatiguing."

"Have you tried it?"

"Yes."

"I think a home life the pleasantest a man can have," said Jocelyn.

"And you have a happy home?"

"Ah! but Nonsuch is my father's home, and will be, I trust, for years. I meant a home of my own, such as a man makes only when he marries."

June showed no sign of confusion.

"I wouldn't marry if I were you," she said, simply; "marriage leads to all kinds of trouble."

And before he could ask her meaning she had reached the gate of Myrtle Lodge, and must say good-bye.

CHAPTER III.

CAPTAIN DESMOND duly arrived at Nonsuch Park, and before he had been there a fortnight fell into the trap unobtrusively designed for him by Lady Bailey.

He began by taking a friendly interest in Blanche for her brother's sake; he ended by

loving her as brave, true men like him love but once in life.

The bronzed, bearded soldier who had seen the loveliest faces of Anglo-Indian society unmoved, surrendered his whole heart to the laughing blue eyes of the unsophisticated country maiden.

And for once the course of love seemed destined to run smoothly. Jocelyn Bailey was unusually moody and preoccupied. Rex and Blanche were perforce left much together, and thrown, as it were, upon each other for companionship.

Blanche never stopped to wonder what made her days so pleasant; she never paused to think how lonely she would be when Rex departed.

She gave herself up to the happiness of the moment, and in the early September days her face took a new charm, her smile a fresh brightness, from the strange new joy that had come to her.

They might have gone on for weeks in this happy, dreamlike state, but one morning Rex found a letter by his plate. It announced Lord Desmond's return to England, and begged his brother to join him in a few days' time at Desmond Castle.

There was a general outcry from the Baileys; only Blanche was silent, but there was a troubled look in her eyes. After breakfast she disappeared. Rex, whose sole object was to find her, discovered her by the banks of the lake, her pretty face pale as though by sudden grief, and a suspicious moistness about her blue eyes.

"What is the matter?"

"Nothing," very sharply.

"What a pretty place Nonsuch is!" said Rex, half dreamily. "I shall never forget the happy days I have spent here—never, while I live!"

"You seem very glad to go away!"

"I am very sorry."

"Are you?"

"Yes, And you, Blanche—may I hope you will miss me just a little?"

No answer.

"Blanche," and there was a grave ring in his voice, "won't you answer me?"

"I shall miss you!" she said, slowly. "One always misses visitors when they go away."

Rex seized her hand.

"Am I nothing but a visitor to you, Blanche?"

She never spoke a word, but she did not attempt to withdraw her hand, and thus encouraged, Rex hurried on,—

"Blanche, my darling! don't you know what has made this time at Nonsuch so happy to me? Blanche, I love you with all my strength, dear! I want you to promise me some day to be my wife!"

The blue eyes drooped; Rex put one arm around her, and drew her closer to himself.

"I am a shocking bad match for a fairy like you; but, my darling, no man could love you more. If only you will give yourself to me, little one, you shall be happy—if love can make you so!"

She just whispered three words in so low a tone, they only just reached his ear.

"Are you sure?"

"Sure I love you! I never doubted that."

"Yet you would go away."

"I was so unhappy, Blanche, I could not guess whether it was all in vain, and I loved you so!"

"Don't go away!"

"But I can't quarter myself on Sir John for ever. Blanche! I must go away some time; only I hope soon to come back and take you with me!"

Blanche shook her head.

"Oh, no; I can't be married for ever so long—they couldn't spare me for a long, long time."

"I think they must."

"I am all they have."

Jocelyn must find a nice little wife to comfort Sir John and your mother."

To his surprise Blanche turned white as death; she trembled so exceedingly, that but for the support of his arm she must have fallen.

"What is it, dear?"

"Can't you guess?"



"I would rather you should tell me."

"I am so uneasy about Jocelyn!"

"Why?"

"He is so altered. Oh! Rex, haven't you noticed it? He is hardly ever at home! He seems to care for nothing but wandering about the house alone!"

It dawned on Rex then that his friend had changed; that Jocelyn never willingly joined either his guest or his sister in their excursions; that he seemed to live, as it were, a life apart, engrossed by his own affairs.

Captain Desmond had not noticed this change before; looking back he felt that Jocelyn was quite different from the blithe young officer who had been his comrade in India.

"Well," said Blanche, feverishly, "don't you acknowledge that it is so?"

"Yes."

"He seems haunted by some secret trouble, went on the anxious sister.

"Can he be in love?"

Blanche shivered.

"I am afraid so."

"Nay, sweetheart, why should you fear? You would spare Jocelyn a wife's love if it made him happy!"

"Gladly; but—"

"Come, Blanche, I am sure you know more of this than you have told me."

"I know nothing, but I fear—"

"Sweetheart, I will share all your fears, and give you your portion of my hopes in exchange."

"I am afraid he is in love with Rosamond de Juvenal."

"I never heard of her."

"She lives at Myrtle Lodge."

"What! your mother's pet niece? Nay, Blanche, I am sure an ancient female of the name of Robinson is the mistress of Myrtle Lodge."

"Yes, but this girl lives with her."

"No one has ever seen her."

"Her existence was kept secret at first, but one day she went to church, and the Paganus asked her to the Rectory. I can't describe her to you. He met her there, and I thought her the loveliest creature I had ever beheld."

"Well!"

"After that day she went back to her life of seclusion. Mr. and Mrs. Pagan called again and again, but they were told she was too ill to see anyone. A physician came from London and brought a nurse. For a whole month the nurse remained at Myrtle Lodge. People tried to question her, but she would answer nothing. They found out at last that she was French, and could not speak one word of English."

"But, Blanche, what has all this to do with Jocelyn?"

"He loves her."

"You have no proof of it."

"I am sure of it."

"And if she is so beautiful why should she not become his wife?"

"Because there is a mystery in her life; because Myrtle Lodge is a place of secrets! She trembled violently. "You don't know the queer stories that are told about the place. They say sometimes the people there are criminals hiding from the law. Beautiful as she was, Rosamond seemed possessed by a living dread; she started at any sound."

"Trust me, Blanche, I will unravel the mystery for you."

Sir John and Lady Bailey were delighted at their daughter's engagement. They would not hear of Rex leaving them, but urged the Earl's joining them at Nonsuch instead of going to his lonely castle.

Rex smiled.

"It is so good of you to ask him. Poor Guy! He has moped nearly to death since his loss."

Blanche was not present at Lady Bailey felt free to ask a few questions.

"Has he really heard nothing of his wife?"

"Not a single word. She left his home in April. He has employed the most skilful detectives in London, has spent money like water in the search, but nothing has ever been discovered."

"You never saw her, I think?"

"Never. She was an orphan, and brought up by an aunt, who was only too glad to get rid of her by marriage."

"Perhaps she has gone to her!"

"Impossible! Mrs. Traveyan and her husband went to Australia the day of my brother's marriage."

"And she was very beautiful?"

"Lovely. I have seen a full-length picture of her, and I never saw so perfect a face. It was a love-match; they never had one word of discord, they lived together in the deepest affection. He brought her to England, and the third day of their return he went to see his lawyers on business; he was absent three hours; when he got back to the hotel his wife was gone."

"And she left no letter?"

"Not a single line."

"It is incomprehensible!"

"People might fancy she was to blame; that she had married him for ambitious motives," put in Sir John.

Captain Desmond sighed.

"I think so myself, in spite of poor Guy's assurances. I believe that she was persuaded to marry him by her relations, and that a meeting with a former lover overcame all her resolutions and she fled."

"But the Earl has faith in her!"

"Unbroken faith."

"It is a strange story."

Captain Desmond attached himself to Jocelyn that evening. With remarkable pertinacity he refused all his friend's efforts to get rid of him.

"You had better go to Blanche," said Jocelyn, coolly. "I want to go out."

"I feel that a stroll in the grounds is just the thing I am inclined for."

"I prefer to go alone."

"Jocelyn, have I offended you?"

The hair of Nonsuch dropped his mask of indifference, and answered sadly,—

"No, but I am so upset and bothered I don't think I quite know what I'm about. I assure you, Rex, I should be miserable company to-night."

"But I want to talk to you."

"You had better talk to Blanche."

"She sent me here."

"Why?"

"She is uneasy about you."

"I'm right enough."

Rex shook his head.

"You can't blind me or your sister either. We know you are changed almost beyond recognition in one short month. Jocelyn, surely you will trust me and confide in me!"

"You couldn't help me."

"I think I could. What troubles you?"

"The old story—women, cards, and horses are at the bottom of all miseries."

"And in this case it is a woman!"

Jocelyn nodded.

"You are serious?"

Captain Bailey removed his cigar from his lips and said, passionately,—

"So serious that I have sworn no other woman shall be my wife."

"And the difficulties?"

"All love does not run so smoothly as yours."

"Won't she listen to you?"

Jocelyn's cheek flushed.

"I think she loves me, but—"

"But she is ambitious!"

The lover shook his head.

"Not in the least; she won't marry me because there is a secret in her life which she declares makes her marrying any one an impossibility."

"What is it?"

"She won't tell me."

"There must be a secret."

Jocelyn shook his head.

"No!"

"I need not ask if she is a lady."

"She is Rosamond de Juvenal. Her home is at Myrtle Lodge."

Then the mystery which hangs over that house has to do with the secret that she you had heard of.

"It is one and the same."

"And you can't tell what it is!"

"I have no idea." Poor Jocelyn spoke the

words almost with a groan. "She tells me Mrs. Robinson, the reputed tenant in her old nurse. She declares there is a solemn reason for the secluded way in which they live, that an awful danger hangs over their heads which nothing but the utmost vigilance can avert."

"It must be an awful life for her."

"That's the worst of it. It is wearing her out. I see her fading day by day, and yet I can do nothing. I implore her to tell me all. She says that she cannot; that she is bound to silence by a solemn vow."

"Jocelyn, you had better go abroad."

"And leave her! Never."

"What good can your staying here do her, if this secret, which can never be revealed, must always stand as a barrier between you? It is but infliction needless torture on you both to stay here—to be within a stone's throw of her, and yet to be parted as completely as by the ocean."

"I cannot go," said Jocelyn, brokenly. "It is weak, despicable, but I have not the courage to go. I love her, Rex; I love her better than my life."

"And you think she loves you?"

"I would stake my every hope of happiness present and to come upon it. June loves me just as I do her."

"I thought her name was Rosamond."

"She was so christened, but she is always called June after the month in which she was born."

"How old is she?"

He waited in breathless silence for the answer.

"Twenty-two."

Captain Desmond went on steadily with his questions.

"I suppose she is of French parentage?"

"I don't know. She is an orphan. I don't think she ever saw England until a few months ago. She came over in April or May."

Any one less wrapt up in their own troubles must have noticed the change that came over Captain Desmond's face. He seemed as one struck by a sudden dread.

"You have said that she is beautiful and of gentle birth," he said, slowly; "I suppose she is highly educated?"

"She sings like a nightingale."

"I wish I could see her."

"Why?"

"A stranger can sometimes do more than a person closely interested. I might be able to persuade her to reveal the secret which divides you."

Jocelyn shook his head.

"She would never break her word."

"She might tell me, at least, if anything could change her resolution. Jocelyn, let me be your ambassador! At least I can do no harm."

And, strange as it may seem, Jocelyn consented. A month of hopes and fears, a month of suspense, had quite unerved him. He was beginning to feel that he must arrive at some conclusion, that he must overcome June's scruples, or for both their sakes see her fair face no more.

"Do not go to-night," said Rex, when he had learned his manner in which the lovers met, "your absence may make her more amenable to persuasion. To-morrow I will be at Myrtle Lodge; and, Jocelyn, I will plead your cause as though it were my own."

But Captain Desmond had no mind to wait for the evening to reconnoitre Myrtle Lodge and its inmates.

He went to Sir John the next morning, and pleaded his desire to see the pretty house whose origin he had learned from Blanche.

"He wanted," he said, "to see the retreat his darling's namesake had built and beautified."

Sir John was nothing loth.

"When you are married," he said, cheerfully, "I shall give Mrs. Robinson notice to leave. Myrtle Lodge will be the very home for you and Blanche when you are tired of the turmoil of London life."

He wrote a very courteous note to Mrs. Robinson,—

"His future son-in-law much wished to see

the cottage of which he had heard so much, would she kindly allow him to look over the house and grounds?"

There was not the slightest preparation or warning given to the inhabitants of the Lodge. Captain Desmond rang at the gate and presented his letter to Mrs. Robinson, who herself obeyed the summons. She read it through, and looked troubled.

"I'm sorry to seem disobliging," she said; "but the house is in great confusion. I could only show you one or two of the rooms and the gardens if that would be your pleasure, sir!"

"I should be delighted."

The old woman led the way through the grounds. Rex behaved with admirable composure, never betraying he had come for any other purpose than to admire the autumn flowers.

A band of the path brought them suddenly to a summer-house, and in it he descried a beautiful young woman with an infant in her arms. He gave an involuntary start just as Mrs. Robinson turned in an opposite direction.

He followed his guide, who believed the little sight in the arbour had altogether escaped him. He talked on indifferent subjects so well that she was completely blinded, and took him into the drawing-room without a suspicion that he had learned the secret she kept so well.

Captain Desmond pleaded for some of the lovely crimson creeper which covered the white stone walls. As his hostess went to cut it he was left alone for a moment in the drawing-room, and opened a book lying on the table.

The inscription inside was "Martha Robinson, from her loving Nell." Desmond recognized the handwriting at once, and knew that his suspicions were correct.

He took the crimson flowers from his hostess with courteous thanks; but his face was very grave and sad as he walked home, for it seemed to him the beautiful frail creature who had blighted his brother's life would have a lasting sorrow on his friend's.

The woman he had seen in the arbour—the woman who, of course, was Jocelyn's love—was Helen the much-loved wife of his brother. The child in her arms was doubtless the cause of her flight.

He understood the story. Some one had loved and deceived her before ever she met Lord Desmond. She married the peer without love; but yet could not bring the last wrong of all upon him, and make him bring up as his own a child that was not his.

Perhaps she had repented of her errors; anyway, deeply as she had sinned, she had just one spark of generosity left. She had given up her home, title and riches rather than pass off her first-born child as heir to the house of Desmond. But if this was so whence came her money, for there was no lack of wealth at Myrtle Lodge? How could a fugitive wife afford the luxuries he had seen in Mrs. Robinson's house?

He went in search of Jocelyn—he felt he could not rest until he had discharged his melancholy duty. Captain Bailey was in the smoking-room; he looked up as his friend entered.

"I hear you have been to Myrtle Lodge. Surely you remembered I told you the evening was the only time you would see my June?"

"I went to see Mrs. Robinson—she has no suspicion I had any other object than to see her flowers."

"Well!"

"Oh, Jocelyn, it is not well."

"You saw her—June?"

"Yes."

"Go on," cried Jocelyn, impatiently. "Don't deal out your poison by drops. I am a man—what she can bear to suffer surely I can bear to hear?"

"I saw her—be brave Jocelyn—sitting in an arbour with a child in her arms."

"It is false!"

"I wish it were. A helpless, long-robed baby."

"It was someone else's child!"

"It could not be."

A deep silence.

"I don't believe it."

"Jocelyn, you may well believe it. Alas! I

have too good a reason to be certain. The woman you have known as June or Rosamond, or any other alias, is in the eyes of the law my brother's wife, Helen Countess of Desmond."

"It is false!"

"My dear fellow, I wish it were."

"I thought you had never seen your sister-in-law!"

"Never. But I have seen a full-length picture of her."

"When did you suspect this?"

"I don't know; it came on me by degrees, like your June. I knew that Lady Desmond had lived abroad until last April; the age corresponded also. I knew that Helen had one marvellous gift, a heavenly voice; when you compared your June with a nightingale I felt sure it must be the same."

"What is to be done?"

Oh, what a weary voice—all heart and life had died out of it.

"You had better not see her again."

"I must see her once again, Rex. I should go on doubting your judgment even to the end if I did not."

"Well—be it so."

It was evening, not much after eight o'clock, that Rosamond de Juvenal stole softly out into the moonlit grounds. Alas, alas, she often met Jocelyn there. She believed he loved her as his own life. She had begun to ask herself whether the awful calamity that had befallen her twin-sister must for all time shut her out from wedded love and happiness.

They were twin-sisters, these two; their father, Colonel Lascelles, had died when they were two years old, then they were parted. Rosamond was adopted by her maternal uncle and placed in a French convent; while the Colonel's sister, Mrs. Ashley, took charge of Helen.

Poor Helen! Her new guardians were wildly ambitious—they hated the thought that Rosamond would one day be better and greater than Helen, and so a few months after the separation they told their niece that her twin-sister was dead.

They were impecunious people, and often in difficulties; they lived in such places as Boulogne and Homburg. England was barred to them on account of debts. When in their roamings they met Lord Desmond they determined Helen should be his wife, as the young couple fell violently in love with each other. There was very little difficulty in securing a coronet for their niece, and the day after Helen was made a countess, Mr. and Mrs. Ashley set out for Australia.

Some months of perfect happiness followed, then the earl took his wife to England. Left alone one morning, Helen was informed a woman was asking to see her; this woman declared herself to be Lord Desmond's lawful wife. She produced the certificate of her marriage—a year before Helen's. She twitted the wretched girl with being no true wife, and finally offered to keep silent for a consideration of a hundred pounds down, and as much more paid quarterly.

Almost beside herself, poor Helen took up a peerage, and there sure enough she found the fatal entry:—

\* "Desmond, Guy Verrall, Earl of, born March 11th, 1865, married November, 1895, to Caroline, daughter of Mr. James Pearson."

She might have distrusted the woman's words, she might have believed the certificate a forgery, but she could not refuse the evidence of the printed page. Rallying all her strength she bade the self-styled Lady Desmond to call on her the next day; and then left alone the poor, distracted creature put on a hat and shawl, and left for ever the protection of the man she had idolized.

Fortunately she had one friend—the old nurse, who had tended her infancy. After leaving the Lascelles Mrs. Robinson had entered a nobleman's family, and was now living very comfortably on an annuity left her by the same master.

She received Nell very tenderly, and then seeing the girl's bitter misery, fearing her life

itself would be the price of her sorrow, she told her of the beautiful twin-sister living in the quiet French convent.

The rest is simple. Rosamond de Juvenal and Helen were reunited, Myrtle Lodge was hired and furnished at June's expense, and the little family removed there; but they were all possessed by an awful dread that Nell's secret should leak out—that she should be despised and scorned because of the wrong worked on her.

To the simple, true-hearted women the strain of dishonour on their name seemed too awful. They would have spent their last penny to hide it.

One other fear they had that Lord Desmond should discover Nell and claim the child she was expecting; for they knew so little of law—they were ignorant that the poor babe's namelessness made it safe for ever from its father.

And now June went to meet her lover almost resolved to tell him all, and let him judge whether Nell's misfortunes, made her an unfit wife for him.

She was rich almost beyond calculation. Of course, she must always provide for Nell and the child, who were friendless, but out of such a fortune as hers even this was a mere trifle.

But Jocelyn greeted her with no lover's smiles; he pressed no tender caresses on her face—he stood stern and cold almost as a judge, while he looked into her face.

"I know all."

Her heart seemed turned to stone.

"All?"

"Reginald Desmond was at Myrtle Lodge this morning. He saw the child and its mother. The secret that had seemed impenetrable to me was patent to him at once!"

June's lips wreathed with scorn.

"I could believe any ill of Captain Desmond; he comes of a dishonourable race!"

"He is a true friend to me, June," his tenderness—his love conquering aught else. "My darling! I can't believe him. Tell me my fears are vain! Oh! deny this miserable story, and I will take your word against the whole world!"

Slowly, solemnly, she answered,—

"I can't deny it."

"You can't deny that Reginald saw his sister-in-law with a child in her arms?"

"I can't deny it!"

A long silence.

"Oh! child, you break my heart!"

"And my own!" said June, with a kind of hoarse sob. "Oh! Jocelyn, why didn't I die before you ever saw me! Why didn't you believe me long ago, when I told you I could never be aught to you?"

"I loved you," he muttered; "nay, I love you still, and you—you are another's!"

It was June's turn to start.

"I am not."

"You are; your own lips have said it. You have confessed to me you are Lord Desmond's wife!"

"I think you must be beside yourself! I never saw Lord Desmond in all my life. I hate him! I should shrink from him as the greatest criminal!"

"June," cried Jocelyn, "what do you mean?"

The truth at last dawned on her. She whispered,—

"Come and see."

He would have offered her his arm, but she refused it.

"You could think that of me!" she cried, indignantly. "You shall not touch me."

She took him straight to the house. On the threshold she paused.

"I have your word of honour that nothing you see here shall be known to anyone else?"

"Yes."

She entered the drawing-room. It seemed to Jocelyn he was dreaming. Were there two Junes? His darling stood at his side, but another figure, the counterfeit of hers, rose up to meet them June and her image were dressed alike. Again and again he looked; the only difference he saw was that his June seemed strong and hopeful; the other girl had a deep sorrow stamped upon her face—her bloom was faded.



It was Jocelyn's love who broke the silence. "Helen, my darling," she said, taking the slim, white hand in hers. "I have brought Captain Bailey here, because he seems perplexed at the resemblance. Probably we shall never see him again. He has promised to breathe no word of what he sees here, and so, my darling, I want you to tell him the tie between us."

"Do not speak a word!" cried Jocelyn, turning to the fragile creature. "I need nothing to tell me you are twin-sisters. Madam, will you not plead for me—will you not tell June you will welcome me as a brother?"

There was nothing of self-humiliation about the girl who had once been called Countess of Desmond. She took Jocelyn's hand and said, gently,—

"June's love is a pearl of great price. If you have won it I do not think my miserable history should divide us."

"He is a friend of the Desmonds," said June, rebelliously. "Can you trust him, Nell?"

"Yes," said Nell, simply. "If he does not despise me I can trust him."

"June," said Jocelyn, archly, "everyone is against you. You had better give yourself to me, and so secure one ally."

She yielded, but with a condition.

"You'll promise never to make me speak to Lord Desmond!"

Her sister's eyes were full of tears. Jocelyn turned to her.

"Will you think me presuming on my success if I ask whether a brother can do nothing to reconcile you to your husband?"

"We never quarrelled," said Nell, faintly. (June had slipped out of the room.) "I think even now if I met him I should forget all. I know he loved me. I cannot think he meant to injure me. Perhaps he believed her dead."

"Who?"

"His wife."

"You must be the victim of a cruel fraud, Lady Desmond. I have known your husband's brother intimately for years. I can swear to you he never had a wife but you."

"She came to see me," answered Nell. "She showed me her marriage certificate. I saw the name in the peerage."

Jocelyn looked bewildered.

"When do you believe he married her?"

"About a year before I knew him; some time in '95."

"In '95 your husband was not Lord Desmond; he only came into the title six months before his marriage. The woman you saw was doubtless his cousin's widow. I know the late Earl made a disgraceful match just before his death."

June came back to find her sister senseless on the sofa.

"You have killed her!" she cried, fiercely.

"No," said Mrs. Robinson, who had just heard all from the visitor; "he has brought her the best news she could hear. She's Lord Desmond's true wife, Miss June, and the poor lassie upstairs is my Lady Alice Desmond!"

"Well."

This was Reginald's greeting when Jocelyn, at a most disreputable hour of the night, at last ventured to Nonsuch, and entered the smoking-room, where his friend was eagerly awaiting him.

"It's all right," said Jocelyn, simply, "and I am as happy, Rex, as you are."

"She has talked you over."

"She did nothing of the kind—she introduced me to her twin-sister, and then, of course, I understood your mistake."

Rex simply stared.

"Your brother will be here next week," went on Jocelyn. "Don't you think his coming might be hastened?"

"To what end?"

And then Captain Bailey, in a few simple words, explained the sad mistake which led to such painful results.

Desmond listened eagerly.

"I'll telegraph for Guy, to-morrow. I say, Jocelyn, what a lucky thing it was you fell in love with June, otherwise the mistake might have lasted out our lives."

There is not much to tell. Lord Desmond,

much bewildered at his brother's summons, obeyed it unhesitatingly.

He was shown straight into Lady Bailey's boudoir. Nell, a little paler, a little more fragile than when he left her, was waiting there.

No one entered to disturb that *à-tête*, where a wife's sweet voice explained the cruel mistake that had nearly wrecked two lives.

Lord Desmond took his wife and daughter abroad, but they returned in time for the double wedding, when Blanche Bailey and Rosamond de Juvenal were united at the altar to the men they had chosen as their kings.

And now, two years and more since that double wedding, Sir John and Lady Bailey live alone at Nonsuch, but they are happy in frequent visits from those they best love, and baby voices make a cheerful noise in the pretty home-like cottage, which is now the pleasantest house in the neighbourhood, strangers having quite forgotten the days when they spoke with bated breath of the Mystery of Myrtle Lodge.

[THE END.]

It has been a generally accepted idea that salt-water could not be successfully used in boilers. The fact that it can be so used has recently been demonstrated and will prove a most valuable discovery. The Yarrow boilers in England, which are made with tubes 1½ inch in diameter, have been tested with salt-water and favourable results are reported. It seems that there is no incrustation and no trouble about the priming, two obstacles in the way of the use of salt-water that have been universally supposed to exist.

It is a notable fact that steel has almost entirely superseded iron as a material for boiler plates. Steel has a greater tensile strength than iron, and much greater ductility and elasticity. From 55,000 to 60,000 pounds per square inch is the tensile strength now required by standard tests. The test is made on steel bars one inch square, and so carefully are the tests calculated that in the specifications for high-pressure boilers it is one of the conditions that the plates shall be of the tensile strength specified per square inch, and that any reduction of area at the point of fracture under test shall not be less than 56 per cent. In other words, an inch bar of steel when strained to the breaking point, must not be reduced in size to not quite one-half the original area of the bar. The varying temperatures to which the boiler is subjected when in use makes it necessary to exercise this care, as the relative ability of the plates must show a clear 50 per cent.

The Japanese are noted for their metal work, and efforts have been made to discover the secret of the alloys of which much of their finest work is made. The following is therefore interesting, the secret having been divulged by workmen who are familiar with such alloys. The "shadko" is an alloy of copper and from 1 to 10 per cent. of gold, the object being placed in a mordant of sulphur, of copper, alum and verdigris until they have assumed the coppered or blue-black hue of sword sheathes and decorative articles. Another of these is "guk-shi-bu-ichi," a copper alloy with 80 or 50 per cent. of silver of the well-known grey colour. What is called "mokume" is a compound of several alloys. About thirty plates of foils of gold, shadko, copper, silver and the last-mentioned alloy are soldered together, holes are made, the plate hammered out, and put in the mordant. The finest Japanese brass "sukchu" consists of ten parts copper and five of zinc, and of bell metals the "karakane" is made of ten parts of copper, four of tin, one-half iron, one and one-half zinc, the copper being melted first, and the other metals added in the above order.

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## A PAIR OF BROWN EYES.

THEY stood above the world,  
In a world apart;  
And she drooped her happy eyes  
And stilled the throbbing pulses  
Of her happy heart.  
And the moonlight fell above her,  
Her secret to discover,  
And the moonbeams kissed her hair,  
As though no human lover  
Had laid his kisses there.

"Look up, brown eyes," he said,  
"And answer mine;  
Lift up those silken fringes  
That hide a happy light  
Almost divine."  
The jealous moonlight drifted  
To the finger half uplifted,  
Where shone the opal ring—  
Where the colours danced and shifted  
On the pretty, changeful thing.

Just the old, old story  
Of light and shade,  
Love like the opal tender,  
Like it may be to vary—  
May be to fade.  
Just the old tender story,  
Just a glimpse of morning glory  
In an earthly paradise,  
With shadowy reflections  
In a pair of sweet brown eyes.

Brown eyes a man might well  
Be proud to win!  
Open to hold his image,  
Shut under silken lashes,  
Only to shut him in.  
O glad eyes, look together,  
For life's dark, stormy weather  
Grows to a fairer thing  
When young eyes look upon it  
Through a slender wedding ring.

## THE JEALOUS SISTER.

—O—O—

### CHAPTER XXXVI.

HILDA took the paper mechanically from the sister's hands, still so excited that she scarcely comprehended her words.

She held it without reading it, listening with a smile to her mother, who was cooling to her bright-eyed grandchild.

"It shall always live at Cloverdale, sweet darling, because dear Auntie Hilda has given the old home back to grandma. It must always love Auntie Hilda, who brought it away with the poor sick mamma from the great wicked city!"

Phyllis touched her sister's arm, saying, impatiently,—

"Read what I showed you, Hilda. It must be meant for you."

And she sat by gloating while the beautiful blue eyes travelled in the greatest wonder over every word.

She guessed what a measure of humiliation it would bring to the proud girl who would not willingly have accepted the lightest favour from Paul Denver.

Phyllis took a malicious pleasure, too, in the thought that Hilda's triumph had not been secured without the aid of another.

It gratified her spleen and envy, that would not down, despite all Hilda's kindness. "Ingratitude is the vice of little minds."

The paper had come to her through the post that day, and this was the first thing she chanced upon. It interested her so much that she had not yet found a marked paragraph meant for herself, or noticed where it came from.

Hilda read on and on, and her lips began to

quiver and her eyes to grow dim with unshed tears.

She comprehended perfectly, as Phyllis had done, although not a name was mentioned, not even the title of her book.

She was overwhelmed with wonder at the force and persistency of Paul Denver's love, that persisted in its loving care, despite all her cold repulses since the wound he had dealt her tender heart.

Surely he had repented and was trying to atone.

But the shock to her nerves was more than she could bear. She lifted her heavy eyes to Phyllis with pathetic comprehension in them, then the lids fell, and she dropped down in a heavy swoon.

"Oh, what was it you showed her, Phil!" entreated her mother, as they both bent over Hilda, trying to restore her to consciousness.

"Oh, it was nothing!" was the curt reply.

And when Hilda had revived and been put to bed in a nervous chill, and the doctor summoned, the mother undertook to find out for herself; but the pencilled paragraph eluded her tearful eyes.

Bertha Manners and her guest happened in opportunely just then, and while Phyllis was out for a moment, Mrs. Stuart confided her trouble to them.

"Phil showed her something in a paper, and it nearly killed the poor child. Look over the columns, Bertha, and see if you can find out what it is, and read it out aloud."

"Here is a pencilled paragraph," said Bertha; and she read out distinctly a paragraph that said that Huntly Warner had been granted a separation from his wife Phil—cause, incompatibility of temper.

Mrs. Stuart cried out, angrily,—

"The wretch, to disgrace poor Phil like that! But no matter; it's a good riddance to bad rubbish. Well, certainly she took it better than Hilda."

And Phyllis, who had come in at the door just as Bertha commenced reading, stood there like a statue of stone, so great was her surprise and humiliation. Perceiving that her entrance had not been noticed, she presently fled from the room, to vent her rage alone.

Deserted and divorced! She, who had been so proud, so overbearing, to be made a mockery to all like this! She could not bear the shame of it, and wild thoughts of suicide entered her mind.

Not that she regretted Warner. It was only the sting of his conduct, the cruel reflection on herself, that wounded. And the worst of it all was that she felt an unerring conviction that she would get scant sympathy from her friends and neighbours, who would very likely say,—

"Served her right for past conduct. 'Pride goeth before a fall.'"

She was humbled at last, proud, selfish Phyllis, and the experience was most bitter.

She locked herself alone in her room for awhile, determined not to face even her mother till she could brave it out before all with pretended indifference.

Meanwhile, Hilda was actually ill for several days from the shock she had received, and Bertha and Rose came daily to cheer her up; but no reference was made to the cause of her fainting. It was supposed that she regarded Phil's separation as a family disgrace.

In three days a letter arrived for her, which she read with burning cheeks, and tossed to her mother.

It was from Huntly Warner, boldly avowing his separation from Phyllis. He wrote frankly,—

"I married Phil through pique at you, but hoping all the while to learn to love her in the end. But a trial of her temper made me hate her so that I grew almost brutal in my dislike of her, so I left her and secured the separation. I know all that happened afterward—how she fell ill, and you came and took her away, like the angel you are; for she was heartless toward you. But I have not squandered all my money, as she tells you, Hilda. I am rich yet, and in a fair way to get richer. Will you come to me, and help me

to become a better man? I have read your little book. It would make any man nobler and better."

Passionate words of love and entreaty followed, but Hilda turned from it with keen disgust, exclaiming,—

"Write to him, mamma, and tell him I despise him more than ever, and he must never dare address me again; then destroy the letter."

Mamma obeyed; but before she burned it she thought it wise to show Phyllis her husband's letter, so that if any lingering love for him remained, it might die beneath this crowning blow.

But Phyllis only laughed bitterly and rent the letter into fragments.

"So ends that chapter," she said.

When Hilda was better she wrote her publisher a letter that seated him on the stool of repentance.

He dared not reply to it; he did not know how to meet her reproaches for deceiving her so, so he forwarded her letter to Paul Denver, confessing his inexcusable fault.

"I daren't ask you to forgive me—I have sinned beyond pardon," he owned. "But you see how she scores us both, threatening to return all those gifts and to take her next book to a rival publisher. Can't you go down there and make our peace with the offended lady? A handsome fellow like you ought to get any girl's forgiveness for such a generous fault as yours—just loving her too well."

Paul was not so sure of that; but he made up his mind to do something, and that was to go and see her, and beg her pardon for what he had done since it had offended her so much. He was all the more anxious to go, because Rose had been writing him letters from Hill Crest, that always contained something about Hilda.

"We are great friends, you know, and I love her like a sister," wrote that artful girl.

"Indeed, Bertha tells me that she thought once you and Hilda would certainly marry, but that a mysterious something suddenly came between your heart and broke off the charming idyl. Bertha and I are just wild to find out all about it, but Hilda does not permit her to even name you in her presence. What crime is it you have committed?"

In his next letter he left her question unanswered, and then came the news of Phyllis' separation and Hilda's illness.

"She goes about like a pale little shadow, sad and heavy-eyed, taking Phyllis's disgrace more deeply to heart than Phyllis does herself. But it is all because Hilda had the tenderest heart in the world—that is, for everyone but my unlucky brother."

Paul guessed too well the cause of her grief and sadness.

"Oh, why is it I can only wound when I try to help and heal?" he thought, disconsolately. "I dare say she hates me more bitterly than ever now."

Yet something drew him to her that he could not gainsay—that "unconquerable spell" of which he had sung to her so sweetly that night in Glasgow.

For more than a year he had loved her now—through joy and pain, through angry self-rebelling, and infinite unrest; through her cold resentment and impatient disdain; and still the passion would not down. Nor time nor absence broke the chain.

He would see her once again and try to set himself right with her, and if she refused forgiveness to his too great love, if she held it only as officious meddling, his loving watch over her storm-tossed life, he must go away hopeless for good and all—hopeless, though unforgetting.

In a few hours after the receipt of the publisher's letter he was en route for Hill Crest.

He did not even stop in London to see his mother. A passionate impatience drove him on and on till he reached Hill Crest.

Arrived there, he did not even go to see his sister first, but taking a carriage to the station, was driven straight to Glenvalda.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE sun was near its setting as Paul unlatched the gate and walked down the gravelled path toward the house between rows of flower-beds that scented the summer air with a pleasant fragrance.

He remembered, as if it were yesterday, the day, now more than a year ago, when he had come to take Hilda to the picnic, his heart thrilling with its new-born love. With what a smiling face she had come to greet him then! But she would be frowning now, and she would have no welcome save angry words.

His heart sank with the burden of his heavy thoughts as he stepped upon the porch, then he started back, for there sat Phyllis with her child in her arms.

She sprang up with a blush of surprise at seeing him, and would have given him an effusive welcome; but it was not from her he desired such a greeting, and he could not forget how she had deceived him in London about Hilda's address, so he bowed with cold brevity, and inquired for her mother.

"I wish to see her on a matter of business," he said, which was indeed a fact.

Phyllis bit her lips with secret pique as she showed him into the airy sitting-room and went in search of her mother.

Paul waited nervously, hoping every moment that Hilda would appear; but she did not, and he began to fear that she was too ill to leave her room.

Then Mrs. Stuart suddenly entered, leaving curious Phyllis listening outside the door.

"I hope you remember me, Mrs. Stuart," the young man said, with a smile.

"Oh, yes, indeed; perfectly well, Mr. Denver," she returned, cordially. And indeed few women, young or old, ever forgot handsome Paul Denver when once seen.

A few cursory remarks, and he branched off into the story of the gold mine and the mining partner which we have already related in Mrs. Penfold's story to her daughter Rose. Then he added:

"We thought for a long while that the man's name was Stourd, hence the vain search of years; but recent developments have proved that it was Stuart, and the mere suspicion came to me to-day that it might have been your husband. Did you ever hear him speak of such a thing?"

"Oh, yes, yes!" cried Mrs. Stuart, becoming very much agitated. "I have heard him speak of owning part of a worthless gold mine in Montana. He used to laugh about his foolish investment out West."

"Not so foolish as it seemed; for if you have your husband's deed to the mine, you will have no difficulty in establishing your claim, and you and your daughter will be very rich."

Phyllis listening outside with angry wonder, heard her mother exclaim:

"This is, indeed, good news, if it proves true. I will look at once among my husband's papers for the deed, if you will excuse me. He had a box of manuscripts that I have never yet examined, thinking them of no value."

Paul smiled, and answered,—

"But among them you will very likely find the paper that makes you the owner of a fortune. But while you are searching, will you permit me to see Miss Hilda?"

"My daughter has gone out for a walk. I think she will be in soon," said Mrs. Stuart, opening the door from which the eavesdropper had just retired.

Paul's face brightened, and he exclaimed, eagerly,—

"If you will tell me what direction she took, I would like to go and meet her on her way."

Mrs. Stuart hesitated a moment, then answered,—

"Her favourite haunt is beneath a clump of willows by the brook-side, where she often stops to rest when out for a stroll. Very likely you will find her there."

Paul waited for no more, but seizing darted past Phyllis, who stood on the porch, hurried down the road toward the



dear spot where he had seen Hilda first, hoping eagerly to meet her there again.

Hilda had taken Bruce and gone for a long stroll.

She had never used her beloved bicycle since she had found out that it was the gift of Paul Denver.

Wearily with her walk, and sad at heart, she threw herself down by the brook to rest beneath the shading willows. Her white hand strayed in the black, shaggy coat of Bruce, and she buried her face in his neck.

"Ah, Bruce, old fellow!" she sighed, "are you so glad to have your mistress back again? Ah, how good it is to be at home again, with you to love me!"

The great Newfoundland whined with delight, and tried to kiss the face of his beautiful young mistress, but she gently restrained him.

"No, no, Bruce; do not be so bold. Lie still. I am tired; I want to rest."

Then there was silence, the water rippling softly past, the leaves whispering together gently overhead.

It was an ideal spot for lovers' vows, that green, shady bank, and Paul Denver thought so as he stole softly on the scene, and gazed with eager eyes at the lovely picture.

His step was stealthy, but some subtle presence seemed to inform Hilda of his coming. She turned her golden head on its shaggy pillow and looked at the spot where he stood, breathless, trembling, afraid to speak, his eager heart shining in his dazzling dark eyes.

She did not start at first, for it seemed to her she must be dreaming. Surely it was not Paul Denver in the flesh, but a vision of her brain. She had dreamed of him so often there that her mind had conjured up something unreal—unreal, but, oh, so wildly dear, so cruelly lamented!

The blue eyes dilated and darkened, a swift flush dyed the pale cheek, the lips began to tremble with emotion, as they met his kindling look of love.

At that moment the dog's fine instinct informed him of an alien presence, and he shook Hilda off, bounding, with a threatening growl, toward Paul, who cried, cheerily,—

"Down, old fellow! Don't you know your friends? Won't you speak to me, Hilda?"

"Why have you come?" she answered, wildly.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

Paul moved nearer to the beautiful, palpitating creature, and answered, recklessly,—

"When I tell you why I came, you will want to drive me away again."

She stood still facing him, with head erect and grave lips, trying to look stern and reproachful, as she exclaimed,—

"I am glad that you have come, for I wish to ask you why you have pursued me with your kindness, and—and—overwhelmed me with unwelcome benefits. Was it to crush me with self-sorrow because—because—" She faltered, and her high courage deserted her. Tears sprang to her eyes.

"He was close enough now to take her hand, to draw her to his heart and kiss her tears away; but he did not dare; he only said, humbly,—

"What reason could there be in all that I have done but love—love that sought your highest good always, and rejoiced in your joy? Is such a love a crime?"

She dashed away her tears with a trembling hand, and retreated a step, faltering inaudibly,—

"You have never loved me—never—else why did you wound me so that night?"

"That night?"

"Ah, you have not forgotten your vows of love that day, and your cruel words that night, turning everything into a bitter jest!"

It almost killed her to remind him of the slight he had put on her; but some impulse, goaded her on to have it put with him at last, to throw his cruelty back into his teeth, and bid

him go for ever, so passionate and keen was her lingering sense of resentment.

"Ah, Hilda, you are trembling, and not strong enough to stand! Will you sit down upon the bank again, and let us reason this out together?"

"How soft and gentle his voice was! He did not intend to be goaded into anger again; and somehow Hilda obeyed him like a little child.

He sat down also, facing her, and continued,—  
"Let us go back to a year ago, and untangle the cruel web that has snared us in its meshes. Listen while I swear that I have loved you always—loved you truly from the first moment I saw you sobbing here by the brook, till now when you have only scorn to answer my love. Yes, in spite of that scorn, I shall love you till I die."

She trembled and thrilled with a joy she could not disavow, but her blue eyes faltered under his asking gaze, and her little hands twisted restlessly in the shaggy coat of Bruce, who lay by her side.

Paul was overjoyed that she would listen to him at last, and continued, eagerly,—

"Ah, Hilda, if your love had equalled mine, how different everything had been; but when Phyllis told me that day at the picnic that Huntly Warner had come and taken you away in jealous rage, that you were only flirting with me, and had promised to marry him in a month, I went wild with wounded love and pride. For a little while I hated you, and longed to pay you back for your cruel coquetry. Hence my meaningless words to you that night, for when I came upon you and Warner together there in the moonlight, I realized that all I had heard must be true, and I could have killed you both in my jealous rage. But I only said some mocking words to let you think I did not care, and rode away."

He paused, but she could not speak for sheer surprise. It almost seemed as if a hand gripped her throat, so tight was the hysterical constriction.

Paul sighed, and continued,—

"I did not think that what I said to you was wrong under the circumstances, for you were cruel to trifle with a love as true as mine; but ever since you have scorned me, as though I had been in the wrong, and I have wondered—always wondered at your place."

He paused, for she had found her voice and opened her lips to speak. She said, in a hollow voice,—

"You will not wonder any longer when you know the truth, as I wish I had known it long ago. They were cruel falsehoods Phyllis told you."

"Falsehoods, Phyllis?"

"Yes, as black as the heart that inspired them—doubtless plotted between her and the villain who hated me because I scorned his suit in the very beginning, and would not let him drive me by threats into a loveless marriage. Oh, Paul, Paul, no wonder you have been so cruel. I can forgive you now!"

"Hilda, my wronged love, my true-hearted darling!"

He sprang to her side and caught her to his heart, thrilling with a mad delirium of love as the white arms closed around his neck.

Bruce whined, and put his paws on her white gown in canine jealousy; but they took no notice.

Hilda was sobbing for joy in her lover's breast.

Such a little thing had stood between them, this wretched year—just the cruel falsehoods of two black hearts, and her own bitter pride and resentment! But now it was all swept away by the warm breath of love, and they were heart to heart again.

"Hilda, I can never forgive myself for believing their tales. Can you forgive me?"

"Ah, so freely—for you have nobly atoned! But Paul, dear Paul, that year of keen suffering can never be effaced. Oh, I never forgive my false sister!"

"I would not try if I were you, my darling. She does not deserve it."

They sat together wrapped in their sweet love-

dream till the sun began to sink behind the hills; then Hilda started.

"Let us go and tell our joy to mamma."

Hand in hand they went along in the twilight, and Presently Paul said:

"Hilda, darling, I have that tandem wheel still stored at the Depot. I never cared for it after that day. Will you ride with me in the morning to see Bertha and Rose? We will give them a charming surprise."

"Yes, indeed, it will be a charming surprise, for Bertha will be wild with joy over our reconciliation," assented Hilda, as she clung fondly to his arm, surprising Phyllis, who met them at the door.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

Clasping Hilda's hand firmly, Paul drew her forward, and said:

"Congratulations, Mrs. Warner, Hilda has promised to marry me."

Phyllis sneered in reply:

"So you have forgiven him at last?"

She started when Hilda answered, spiritedly:

"I have found out that there was nothing to forgive, except the readiness he showed in believing the cruel falsehoods you told him that day, and we should have been reconciled long ago but for the ingenuity you afterward displayed in keeping us asunder."

She was almost frightened at the anger that flashed from Hilda's eyes, for what if the wronged girl should turn her out-of-doors with her baby in revenge for her evil deeds?

She was not in the least repentant, and she was sorry that Hilda was going to be happy at last; but she did not dare betray her malice for fear of the consequences. The time had come at last for her "to eat humble pie."

So she swallowed her rage, and said, sullenly:

"I am sorry for the part I acted toward you, and I hope you will both forgive me."

"I shall not try," returned Paul, unflinchingly, in his indignation, and even gentle Hilda saw through her artifice, and answered, coldly:

"I don't think you are sorry, Phil, over anything being found out. It will be hard for me to forgive you, but I shall always take care of you and your child, and I suppose this is all you care about."

It was perfectly true; but Phyllis was saved an evasive reply by her mother coming out with a yellow document in her hand, saying, joyfully:

"I have found the deed, Mr. Denver."

"What does it all mean?" exclaimed Hilda, in surprise, did the angry Phyllis sneered:

"It means that Mr. Denver has found out you are the heiress to a gold mine, so he made up his mind to marry you."

The happy lovers only laughed at her spleen, for her wings were clipped now, and she could harm no one but herself by her venomous raid.

In her eagerness to share the good fortune that had come so unexpectedly to her mother and sister, Phyllis concluded to change her tactics, and try what apparent good nature could do, and the result proved most agreeable to all.

"I won't have to keep it up long, for as soon as Hilda is married and out of the way I can manage mamma just as I used to do, and I mean to get a good share of my step-father's money."

But she was doomed to be mistaken. In her plans for the week, long-suffering mother took a hint out of Phyllis' book while she had held the balance of power, and, although not of a sufficiently ignoble nature to meet out so cruel a measure, still overruled her authority with a firmness under which the victim bowed in impotent wrath.

She had an allowance from Hilda for herself and child, and Mrs. Stuart refused to supplement it with anything of a nature of gift or loan.

"You have enough, and I shall give mine for my grandchild," she retorted, when urged to needless extravagance. "Besides, I need quite a sum in other charities."

When Mrs. Stuart said "other charities" in that significant tone, Phyllis winced and deferred the discussion. It had too distinct a flavour of



HILDA STOOD STILL FACING PAUL, TRYING TO LOOK STERN AND REPROACHFUL.

her early married days, when her mother and sister had been her scorned dependents. "We got back our mete as we measure."

In the days that followed the reconciliation of the lovers she had ample opportunity to exercise the bitter envy that had been her unhappy birthright.

It had been announced that Rose Denver was to be married in December to a titled young Englishman, and every one who had the slightest right of dictation in Paul's marriage insisted that the wedding should take place at the same time, so that the two couples should "sell the same o'er" together.

Hilda was prevailed on to consent, although her mother bewailed her youth.

"Not eighteen till January," she said.

"We will excuse her youth. The fault will mend with time," the prospective husband answered, gaily.

So preparations for the *trousseau* went forward with speed.

Three seamstresses were engaged at Cloverdale, among them Miss Tucker, who had not found her old friends so prosperous that she could afford to lay aside her skilful needle.

But when Hilda warmly offered her a home at Cloverdale, she was too independent to accept mere charity. She would "visit among her kin and friends, and always lend a hand with her busy needle as long as her old eyes held out," she said. Any fate was better than to be torn away again from her dear old home.

So she came to Cloverdale and set many dainty stitches in the beautiful *trousseaus* of the fair girl she admired so much, and even travelled up to London in December to the grand marriage; for Hilda had to go to London to be married, just to please sweet Rose, who wanted both to be brides at the same hour and side by side.

Paul's mother was probably reconciled to "that pretty little scribbler," by the fact that she turned out to be the heiress who was going to wrest half his gold mine away, for she made much of bonny Hilda, even coming down to the detested

country to make a week's visit and get acquainted with Paul's betrothed. Perhaps Hilda's sweetness won her for its own sake then, for she was ever afterward celebrated for her devotion to her daughter-in-law.

"So gifted and beautiful, you know, even if she had not inherited a shilling," she had been heard to remark to appreciative friends.

How glad Bertha was when she was taken into the secret of Hilda's estrangement from Paul.

"I believe I should have died of curiosity if I hadn't found it out sooner or later," she declared; then hugging Hilda with energy: "Darling, I always said you were made for each other, and I am so glad you will be really my cousin now!"

Every one else was so pleased and happy, it was a pity Phyllis alone should hug that spite and envy to her heart; but it only waxed greater with the waning days, and she declined to accompany her mother to the grand London wedding.

"I have had enough of the fuss already; I won't follow it up," she said, tartly, and breathed a sigh of bitter relief when the house was clear of all but herself and the child and servant. "I hate their charity. I shall teach you to hate them too if I can," she cried, bitterly.

Perhaps it was in punishment for her cruel threat that Heaven took away the child when he was in his fourth summer, before she had instilled in him her own unhappy nature. She was indeed left alone, for she neither gave love to any other of her kindred nor invited it. With the flight of years she grew morose and unsociable, until Mrs. Stuart pleaded successfully with Miss Tucker to come and be her companion, owing that Phil was all wrapped up in herself, and hated everything and everybody since precious little Eric died.

"I'm lonely with Phil, but I can't leave the poor thing to mope alone while I go to visit Hilda and her children," she said. "As for marrying, I wish she would; but she says that

one experience has soured her, and no wonder. But I begged her not to marry that wretch!"

The grand double wedding of Hilda and Paul and Rose and Lord Rochester, was an event to be remembered long even in that city of grand affairs; but the best of it all was that both were love-matches, and brought purest happiness to both couples—Paul and Hilda in the grand mansion in London, and Rose and her husband on their fine English estate.

Hilda wrote but few novels after her marriage. She was too happy, she said to her publisher, who rather complained of her inactivity.

"No story is interesting save one that depicts sorrows or tragedies mixed with its love, and how can I write of anything sad when my life is all sunshine!" she said to her adoring husband, who answered with a kiss.

[THE END.]

THE highest bridge of any kind in the world is said to be the Leo River Viaduct on the Antofagasta Railway in Bolivia, South America. From the surface of the stream to the level of the rails this celebrated bridge is exactly 686½ ft. in height, the length of the principal span is 80 ft., and the distance between the abutments is 802 ft.

THE Paris Exhibition of 1900 is still in search of a striking novelty. Some 250 schemes have been submitted, but not one of them displays any marked originality. Even the idea of building three new Eiffel Towers in proximity to the old one, connecting their summits by a platform, and raising upon this a fifth structure 600 ft. high, impresses the mind with nothing but a weary sense of bulk. Another gentleman proposes to moor a real live whale in the Seine. A third project is, at least, more capable of realization. It is proposed to make wax figures of all the most famous actresses and courtisans of ancient and modern times, and display them in appropriate costumes.





"I SAY NO," SAID THE GIRL, PLUCKING UP SPIRIT AND LOOKING AT MR. MEE WITH A GLANCE OF PASSION.

## THE BROWN LADY.

—201—

### CHAPTER I.

CHRISTMAS EVE, eight o'clock at night, inky darkness outside, a heavy, sullen rain pouring down steadily. Inside, a cheerful family circle, relations and friends lately united, with merry, happy faces, brilliant lights, blazing fire, a luxurious room, and a well-spread board laden with Christmas dainties.

Nothing of the kind presents itself in the scene before us. A bare apartment, a dying fire, one tallow candle, the remains of a frugal meal, &c., the bones of a herring, and an empty tea-cup; and, seated on a low chair, cowering over the fender to catch the last gleams of warmth, a very pretty girl—without a friend in the world, without any fortune, except her face, and two shillings and fourpence in her old leather purse.

She has not a relation that she knows of; she is ignorant of any accomplishment that would help her to earn her daily bread, and at the present dismal moment, as she sits shivering over the almost empty grate, she sees the hag starvation within measurable distance; indeed, there is nothing now between them but a miserable twenty-eight pence.

And how came this girl to find herself in such desperate straits? To explain this I must relate her previous history in as few words as possible.

As an infant she was left in charge of an old lady, who lived in a remote village in Cheshire; who her parents were, why she lived with Miss Mee, she never learnt. She remembered no other home than Miss Mee's neat cottage. From infancy until she was nineteen she had lived as monotonous a life as a young cabbage.

She had gone to the dame school in the village until she was fifteen, and had learnt to read, write, cipher, and sew; more than this, she was a beautiful needlewoman, was fond of reading, and had a very sweet voice, which was heard in

the choir on Sundays, but she could not play a note, draw a stroke, nor read a line of French.

She had no lucrative accomplishments. Moreover she had no companions; the schoolfellows were village girls, daughters of the butcher, baker, and blacksmith, and "Aunt Jane"—as she called Miss Mee—sternly discouraged any intimacy. There were no walks, no tea-drinkings and blackberry-pickings for Linda May.

She stayed at home, read the daily paper to her aunt, helped to water and weed the garden, or went messages to the village, to save the shoe leather of old Nancy, the factotum of Mona Cottage.

"Aunt Jane" was prim, narrow-minded, and strict, and kept Linda in the order which was usual fifty years ago. She must not loiter or even lean back in a chair; she must not cross her feet or put her elbows on the table; she must not ask questions and give answers. She must be silent, obedient, industrious, and, in short, a model girl—and Linda was all this, having been scrupulously trained in the way she should go, from her infancy upwards.

As she grew on in her teens she outgrew the mild (!) rule of passive obedience; she began to be inquisitive. And on her fourteenth birthday she broke into open revolt, and in reply to "Don't ask questions," boldly said,—

"I must, and will know who I am—where I came from, Aunt Jane! It is cruel of you to keep me in ignorance—it is time I knew!"

"Ignorance is best in your case," said Aunt Jane, frowning over her spectacles, and laying down her knitting.

"Why?" she asked, brusquely.

"Ah! If I told you why you would know all."

"And why may I not know all?"

"You may some day; you are too young now."

"At least, are my father and mother alive?"

"No; they are both dead years ago."

"And have I no relations?"

"None that would care for you."

"Then you are nothing to me!"

"Nothing."

"And why do you give me a home?"

"Partly for charity, partly because I am fond of you, partly because I receive five-and-twenty pounds a-year for your board and lodging."

"And when I am grown up what is to become of me? Am I always to live here?"

"Yes."

Linda sighed wearily, and the old woman said,—

"Why do you sigh? You have a very good home, you have not to earn your bread, you have plenty of wholesome food and warm clothes, you are educated!"

"Yes—educated, but I feel very ignorant. I am a common village girl; I wear coarse dresses, and thick shoes, and sit next the blacksmith's daughter in class; but you won't allow me to walk home with her, or take tea with her. Why is that? Am I—am I—as Nancy once told me—a lady?"

Dead silence for a moment, and then Miss Mee burst out passionately,—

"Nancy is an old fool!"

"Then what am I?" persisted the girl.

"A most unfortunate, friendless creature, without kith or kin or fortune, that must keep herself very quiet, and just creep through the world without attracting anyone's notice. There I now don't ask me any more questions till you are twenty years of age. It's a nice thing to have a chit of fifteen to cross-question her betters!"

Nancy, the old servant, was not so secretive, especially after she had been down to the village and brought up a bottle of gin under her apron.

On some occasions—rare, we must admit—Linda had come into the kitchen and found Nancy rocking herself to-and-fro, and complaining of "a weakness in her legs." And certainly there was an incoherency about her speech, and a wildness in her eye, that innocent Linda attributed to keen physical pain, and was so kind and sympathetic that once or twice Nancy had snatched her to her bosom and uttered strange, rambling sentences such as,—

"I know more than they think, close as they are. My darling girl, you will have your rights yet. You're a real lady, all out. Sure Miss Mee was only the ladies' maid. I am not saying a word against her, and she is as fond of you as if you were her own, though she is so—so—"

Here Nancy would let her head fall suddenly forward, and drop off to sleep with startling abruptness.

It was only during these attacks of illness that she was so communicative. At other times she withdrew every statement with angry vehemence, and declared that Miss Linda was dreaming.

As years rolled by Linda became more independent, and from being treated as an infant took rather a lead in the establishment. She scraped acquaintance with the Rectory young ladies through the parish library and Sunday-school.

The Misses Wilson were rather pleased to patronise the village beauty—for she was a beauty—and had her up to see at the Rectory, when there was no one at home but themselves; lent her books and patterns of fancy work, and related to her amazed and eager ears tales and anecdotes of the great world—a world of tennis parties, country dinners, picnics, and children's treats.

Between themselves they had often wondered about Miss Mee's niece.

Miss Mee herself was a prim, respectable, retiring person, who had a neat cottage, a pretty garden, and a pew in church; but who, for all her primness and reserve, could not conceal the fact that she was not a lady.

But her niece, Linda May, was like an eagle in a crow's nest, and looked, by her cut and carriage, as if she had the blood of all the Howards in her veins.

She was not Miss Mee's niece—she was not of the same type.

She had perfectly classical features, a skin like alabaster, and beautiful bronze-brown hair, so utterly different from the ordinary village belle—all flaxen locks, and milk and roses!

Then, in spite of her plain education and ordinary surroundings, she had all the ideas of a lady, and was even more refined and fastidious in some respects than they were; and her plain, ill-made dress no more disguised the grace of her figure than her clumsy village shoes and gloves concealed the smallness of her feet and hands.

Old Nancy, during one of her "attacks," had dropped hints, that had spread through the village, that Miss Linda May was a lady—a real lady—and so one in the place was fit to wipe her shoes; but then, people knew old Nancy's weakness, and did not receive all she said as gospel truth.

Linda May was certainly a genteel-looking girl, but that was all, as far as looks went; and she had not a bit of pride about her, said the neighbours, and why should she? Ten to one she was a foundling off a door-step.

One day in autumn, walking through a field, when the corn stood breast high on either side of the barren pathway, Linda met the two Misses Wilson walking single file; and behind them a gentleman with a swarthy face, and piercing black eyes.

He stared at her in a manner that brought the blood to her face; and when she had passed on she distinctly heard him say—in the thin autumn air—every word was audible.

"What a lovely face! Who is she?"

"Oh! Only a girl in the village." Old Miss Mee's niece!" returned Miss Selina, in an off-hand way.

"A lovely face!"

Had she a lovely face! The idea was so new to her that she was obliged to sit down on the next stile, and think it over; and then, directly she reached home, she ascended to her own little whitewashed chamber under the eaves, and stared hard at the reflection in the glass.

What did she see! Brown eyes, soft as velvet, rippling, reddish brown hair, and a clear cut—almost statuesque, set of features, and so this was beauty!

If she had beauty, why should she keep so

quiet, and creep through the world as Aunt Jane had declared to be her duty?

The first seeds of vanity were sown, and grew apace—sown by the casual remark of the dark-faced stranger.

Linda saw his eyes fixed on her as she sat in the choir on Sunday, and felt a glow of half-guilty exultation.

At eighteen Linda May was an unsophisticated, simple-minded country girl; at eighteen Linda May was lovely, and very much amazed to glean the fact—the unexpected news—from the lips of a passing stranger.

After a heretofore uneventful life events now were crammed into a very short space in her existence.

Old Nannie fell downstairs during one of her attacks, and was picked up stone dead, having broken her neck.

The shock told upon old Miss Mee, and a series of colds weakened her hold upon life; and, finally, a specially severe winter laid her on her death-bed.

A young girl had replaced Nancy in the kitchen, but Linda never suffered her to enter the sick-room, and took all the nursing upon herself, and attended the sinking patient with all the skill of a sick nurse, and the affection of a daughter.

One night, as she stood beside the bed before lying down on her own little couch, the old lady said, in a feeble voice,—

"Linda, you are near nineteen. It's time you knew. If I don't get over this I don't know what's to be done with you! I've left you my bit of money—the twenty-five pounds stopped two years ago. My will is wrote out by myself, and signed by Nancy and Tom the milkman, and you'll find it in the secretary downstairs with all my papers; and there's some letters concerns you, tied with a piece of yellow silk cord. However, I feel more lively-like to-night. Where's Billy, the cat! Put him up on the bed to keep my feet warm. You'll be good to him, Linda, and you'll stop on here; but I'm talking nonsense. I'll live many a year yet. Why, I'm only sixty-four, and my mother lived to a hundred. Then put the cat in his own place, and to-morrow morning I'll tell you what's been long boiling over in my mind. I'll tell you your own story, no matter what comes of it."

"Oh, will you, Aunt Jane? Will you, really?" said the girl, eagerly. "Could you not tell me some now!"

"No; not till to-morrow," shaking her cap frills as she spoke. "But you need not look too joyful, dear, for it's a bitter black tale you have to hear. There give me my draught, and let me go to sleep. You shall have it all to-morrow morning."

All through the night Linda tossed and turned on her narrow couch. She was so restless and excited that she could not sleep. It was well to be Aunt Jane, who never stirred and slept like a rock, but then Aunt Jane had not such an event before her as she had on the morrow. On the morrow all the mystery of her life would come to an end, and towards morning she fell into a doze, with this thought uppermost in her mind.

Then daylight came, and she rose and went to the bedside of her patient. The mystery of life was at an end for Jane Mee. No wonder she had lain so still, when she slept the sleep that knows no waking. There she lay—cold, stiff, and dead—with her favourite cat curled up beside her.

## CHAPTER II.

THE news of Miss Mee's death spread far and wide over the village of Manister. A kind-hearted neighbour undertook to see after the last rites, and to look into Miss Mee's affairs, and see how Linda has been left. But this office was unexpectedly taken out of his hands by a clean-shaven, elderly man, with thin lips and a cruel grey eye, and a disagreeable manner, who arrived on the second day, and announced that he was a publican from Liverpool, and Jane Mee's brother and heir-at-law. He arrived late

at night, but before he retired he cut down the funeral expenses, and ate an extraordinary large supper. He treated Linda as if she were a servant, and the servant as if she was a woman.

The morning after the funeral he asked for his sister's keys, and locking himself in the sitting-room, proceeded to ransack the secretary. He turned it out most methodically, and came upon receipts for jam, hair wash, and the cure of chilblains, receipted bills, a packet of letters with a yellow string that was in some foreign language, finally the will beginning,—

"I, Janet or Jane Mee, being in full possession of my faculties"—and then she went on to leave all her savings—her cottage and furniture, and clothes to her dear adopted niece Linda May, to be held in trust for her until she was twenty years of age by her dear brother, Thomas Mee, of the "Corkscrew and Fiddle," Everton, Liverpool, and begged he would accept the sum of five-and-twenty pounds for his trouble."

"I'll accept a good deal more; of that you may take your dave, Jane," he muttered, as he came to the end of the page. "It's the will of a doting old man woman, and not worth the paper it's written on. Nide hundred pounds and the lease and furniture is no blind nut, and may come in very handy to your affectionate brother Tom. The girl may have the clothes and a five, and jolly well off to get them. I'll take her to London, and turn her loose there to get her own living. I'm not going to have any mysterious strangers a living on me. Jane was a fool to take her, and I always expected she'd do this. However, I came promptly, and there's no harm done. What the mind don't know, Miss Linda May, the heart won't grieve for."

And he rose and poked the fire briskly, made a large cavity among the coals, and then dropped in the will, which blazed very nicely.

Casting his eyes about they fell upon the packet of letters, and he seized them, saying,—

"Can't make out the lingo." But then, he knowing what tales they might tell, "best be on the safe side," so he poked them down on the top of the will, and was rather impatient that they were such a long time in burning.

After this performance he opened the door and called loudly for lunch—"bread and cheese, and beer."

It was brought in by the girl with rather a surly air, and laid on the table before him.

"Where's the other girl?" he asked.

"Miss May is upstairs."

"Miss! she's no more miss than you are. Tell her I want her, and look sharp about it."

Presently Linda came down, and entered the room timidly. She was not used to men, and this loud-voiced, imperative stranger cowed her.

"I've had a turn out of the things." Then he said, speaking with his mouth full, "there's no will."

"No will!" she asked. "Oh, but there must be! She said it was in the secretary."

"Oh! she said that, did she! And maybe she told you what was in it!" he asked, sarcastically.

"She did!" she said, looking down at her feet.

"Well!"

"She left the cottage and some money to me."

"The deuce she did! She was wandering—she could not mean it. I am her own brother—the heir-at-law. There's no will—not a line. I come in for every shilling and every stick."

"And what am I to do?"

"You? Oh, you may have her clothes. I suppose you have no friends; you're nobody's child!"

"There were letters about me," she said.

"Letters tied with a piece of yellow silk—did you see them?"



When she desisted the girl suddenly placed her hands before her face and burst into tears.

"Well, well, what's up now?" he asked, fretfully. "What on earth is the matter with you, eh?"

"Oh, Mr. Mee, are you sure that you did not see her letters?" she said, taking her hands from her face and looking at him piteously.

"Sure and certain."

"Then they are lost, and I shall never know who I am!"

"What trash and nonsense!" he exclaimed.

"Why, I can tell you who you are, slap off."

"Oh! can you?" she ejaculated.

"Yes, you're an uncommonly smart, understanding girl, with a neat figure-head, and I could get you a place as barmald to-morrow."

"Barmald!" she echoed.

"Well, you must earn the bread to put in your pretty little mouth," he said, with a coarse laugh; "and you won't earn it pleasanter."

"I'd rather pick rags!"

"Oh, you need not come to that; you are sure, with your ways and airs to get some nice berth in some family. I'll give you Jane's old clothes and five pounds to start you, and you can't say I did not come down handsome, considering you are a stranger, eh? Yes, and I'll throw your ticket to London into the bargain! What do you say?"

"I say no," said the girl, plucking up spirit and looking at him with a glance of passion in her dark eyes. "I shall stay here; I shall find employment here. I have friends in Manister."

"There is no opening in this bit of a place for a girl like you. When I talked of a barmald's place I was only joking; we shall get you a comfortable home in some grand family as companion to a lady. How would you like that?"

"I cannot tell; I know so little; I am not experienced or educated."

"Fiddlesticks!" he interrupted; "you can read aloud; you write a first-class hand. I suppose you can sew, eh?"

"Yes, I am a good needlewoman."

"Well, then, there you are. You have only to be pleasant, and flattering, and run messages, and look pretty, and you'll find a home with some nice old lady, and maybe she'll leave you a fortune!"

Linda was not mercenary, and knew very little of the value of money, and she did not believe in being left fortunes after her recent experience. Nor was she tempted by Mr. Mee's alluring picture of an easy, lazy life.

Until now it had never occurred to her that she would have to work for her bread and trust entirely to her own resources, and she felt both helpless and bewildered.

Visions of existence in Mona Cottage, with the cats and Sara for company, tea at the Rectory, liberty to go and come and speak to whom she pleased; finally, comfortable old maidism, and a reputation of Aunt Jane's respectable existence had been the programme that had flashed across her mind. But now this strange, imperious, loud-tongued man had come to cast her from the nest and bid her try her own wings and fly away into the world. No, not into the world, she would stay at Manister.

"I shall remain here where I have friends," she stated, with decision.

"And live on them! Wait till you see how long that will last," he returned, with a scoffing laugh. "You don't know the world, my dear. Once your friends find you haven't a penny they won't be rubbing after you and offering you a home; and I must shut up this place and put it in the market as soon as we have had the auction."

"And what is to become of the cats?" she asked.

"The cats? Brown team."

"Oh, don't I tell you them names at any rate. Mrs. Tice of the High Farm, will take care."

"And you wouldn't take you too, eh? Anyhow, you ought to get this afternoon and look round and see what people advise. You can tell 'em that I am willing to take you away and start you in London in a comfortable place, where you will be treated as a lady, and that I'll give you out and give you money in your pocket as well."

That same afternoon Linda May put on her hat and walked over to the High Farm. She had not a doubt in her mind as to what Mrs. Hughes would say. She was always against gadding, had never been out of Manister in her life. She would say, "Stay, and we will find you something to do." But to Linda's amazement Mrs. Hughes's face became very long as she related her story.

"No will, you say, and never left you a brass farthing! Well, well, well! I could not have believed it of Jane Mee; but the brother seems inclined to do the thing handsomely, and provide for you in a way—"

"Yes, but I don't like him, Mrs. Hughes. I don't like his rough manner, nor his eyes and voice."

"You can't think of them things when you got your bread to earn. Take my advice and take his offer."

"Take it!"

"Yes, Bob and I would be glad to have you here for a spell—say a month—but you know we have our own to look after, and at the end of the month you would be no forwarder, and there's nothing for you to do. You would not care about dressmaking, and, loaded, you look above it, for I don't know who you are or what you have come from, but you have none of Jane Mee's blood in your veins. You're a born lady, and best take a good chance, and maybe get back among your own sort."

Mr. Hughes, however, would give the cat a good home. He was a famous mouser, and could earn his living.

Mrs. Hughes's verdict was echoed with variations by all the community except the Misses Wilson, who happened to be away.

It was unanimously decided that Linda May was to go and make a start for herself in London. What in the world would keep her at Manister?

And Mr. Mee, who had been making acquaintances at the public-house, the "Rose and Crown," had spoken in a very handsome and sensible way. Linda May was always shy and too much kept under; she did not know what was good for her.

The upshot of all this was that two days after her conversation with Mr. Mee Linda found herself at the railway station en route to London. Her two boxes were crammed with Aunt Jane's wardrobe.

She had a huge bunch of wild flowers in her hand—a parting gift from Rosie, the blacksmith's daughter—and various pouches and needle-books and markers were packed away, offerings from her schoolfellows.

Also a handsome prayer-book, the gift of the Misses Wilson; and with this equipment, and with many tears and parting kisses, Linda May's little barque was pushed out of harbour to take its chance upon the great ocean of life.

### CHAPTER III.

LINDA'S "guardian," as he dubbed himself, took her to a dingy lodging over a china shop near the Edgware road, and then set resolutely to work to find her something to do.

So active was he that at the end of three days he procured her the situation of governess in the family of a man in his own line of business, who had a "country place," as he was pleased to call it, out beyond Battersea-park.

To this country place Linda was introduced by her guardian, and duly deposited in the hall, with her two boxes.

She found it a small, pretentious villa, all gables and corners, and with but little room.

The mistress was as pretentious as the house—but she was by no means small, being on an unusually large scale.

Her company voice was an affected drawl, but her everyday manner was a bullying, sharp air, acquired among barmen and backward clients, at the "Blue Cow," in "the business in the city," as she now wondrously called it.

Mrs. Hogg had been a handsome barmald, in her day, and still considered that day at its zenith. She had ruddy cheeks, coal-black hair, worn in an enormous fringe; sharp, coal-black eyes, with a spark of fire in them.

She was very fat, and was dressed in what she was pleased to term a tea-gown of salmon coloured cashmere, and her pudgy fingers were covered with imitation diamond rings.

"So this is the young person!" she said, haughtily. "Sit down—pray—Miss—ah—Miss Mee."

"May," corrected Linda's companion.

"Oh—May. How old are you?"

"Nearly nineteen."

"Any experience?"

"No," replied Mr. Mee. "She's not been brought up to earn her own living, and she is too modest to speak up for herself. She is a splendid needlewoman, and can write and cipher like any clerk."

"And music?"

"No music, except singing. Instrumental music is going out of fashion among the upper classes, as you may know, Mrs. Hogg."

"That's true," she replied, nodding her head.

"And references, Mr. Mee?"

"I am her reference," he answered, with dignity. "Your husband won't ask more than that, and if every young wretch had as good a one she might be proud."

"Ah! Well, and terms? I can't say more than fifteen pounds a year to begin with; the children are small, and only three of them; and Miss May will have a luxurious home," looking round the apartment with much complacency.

"Fifteen pounds for the first year and washing," said Mr. Mee. "And let me tell you, Mrs. Hogg, that you are getting a dead bargain," and so she was. "I am off to-night for Liverpool, so Miss May will, as arranged, come at once."

After a little conversation Mr. Mee took leave, and beckoning to his *protégée* to accompany him into the hall, said,—

"Now you've got a first-class start. Here is five pounds for you; save it up, and when you are rich and prosperous, don't forget that it was Thomas Mee gave you your first lift. Good-bye!" and wringing her hand he seized his umbrella and was out of the hall before she could frame any reply.

"Chandos House," despite its high-sounding name, was a thin-walled, cheap little villa—and everything within it was on a thin, cheap scale, except its mistress. She lounged in a tea-gown, with her fringe in curl papers in what she called her boudoir; whilst Linda found that she had not only to teach three dull, unruly imps to read and write, but also had to wash, dress, and take them out for a walk and keep them in charge all day long, unless Mrs. Hogg wanted her hair "done," a dress altered, or a letter written.

At first Mrs. Hogg was charmed with her prize; she was so quiet, so industrious, so useful, and looked so genteel walking out with her children—and it was such a grand thing to crow over Mrs. Smith, and talk of her "governess." In these days she took Linda into her confidence, and told her of all her conquests before she met Mr. Hogg, of the presents she had refused and the lords who had been at her feet!

But after two months of hard work—for her daily tasks seemed unlimited—from teaching to cooking, from cooking to hair-dressing, and letter-writing. She never had a second she could call her own, but all this was bearable whilst Mrs. Hogg was pleasant; but when she became sharp, overbearing and cutting in her remarks, the position was by no means agreeable.

Linda was at a loss to guess why she was treated in this way. The truth was that Mr. Hogg and a friend of his, a red-faced commercial traveller, had spoken of Miss May the governess before Mrs. Hogg in terms of the warmest eulogium. "What a figure! What eyes! What hair!" Mr. Hogg and his friend had never seen anything like it!

Vainly Mrs. Hogg sniffed and fumed, and said Miss May was a party-faced slip of a girl, with no more style than a lamp-post.

The two men, who had had a good deal of whiskey and water, were boisterously unanimous. "Miss May was a beauty! a clipper!"

Poor Miss May upstairs little knew what days of misery this verdict cost her. Somehow or other she never did anything right after-

wards, never could please; she was worked like a galley slave and loaded with abuse.

At last the worm turned. "Why," she asked herself, "should she remain here any longer? It was worse than being in prison, and her life was miserable. She had five pounds in her pocket—Mrs. Hogg owed her three—she would return to her lodgings over the china shop, advertise, and try her luck once more. She was qualified as a nursery governess, ladies' maid, and cook."

So the next time Mrs. Hogg was exceptionally harassing, and called her unhappy dependent "an ugly, red-headed fool—not worth her salt!" the ugly, red-headed fool plucked up sufficient spirit to answer her, and say,—

"In that case, Mrs. Hogg, you will be glad to get someone who is worth their salt, and I'll go, if you please, this day month!"

But long before that she was gone. Mrs. Hogg was a woman of ungovernable temper. She was determined to make it "hot" for Miss May as long as she stayed. Miss May once discovered that she, too, had a temper, and a fiery one when upset. She told Mrs. Hogg one or two very plain truths, had her ears boxed, and found herself and her trunk turned out of the house in half-an-hour's time—no character, no wages!

By the advice of her landlady, Linda applied for her money to Mr. Hogg, at his place of business, and got it; but a character was beyond hope. Her very name had the effect of sending Mrs. Hogg into a furious passion, and beyond giving her his one, Mr. Hogg could do nothing whatever.

For a few weeks Linda lived very carefully on her capital, trying advertisement after advertisement in vain. "Where had she been last? What were her accomplishments? Who could recommend her?"

She wrote an appeal to Mr. Mee—who had just sold Mona Cottage for a round sum—but he said to himself, "If I encourage this girl she will be a milestone round my neck all my life," and, accordingly, he wrote back a short note, saying that he had placed her in a very comfortable home, and done all he could for her, and washed his hands of her for the future.

She then stooped her pride to write to Mrs. Hughes, and Mrs. Hughes sent her a post-office order for five shillings, and advised her to take in plain work. Next she tried the Miss Wilsons—her letter was returned. They were abroad, and the Rectory was in their hands.

Wherever she looked the door seemed shut in her face. She became poorer and poorer; she gradually pawned the most of Miss Mee's wardrobe. She now owed two weeks' rent, and five shillings to the grocer's at the corner.

"What was to become of her?" she asked herself, as she cowered over the fire that melancholy Christmas-eve. She must either die of starvation or go into the workhouse! Of course it would be the workhouse.

As she sat thinking over the fire and wishing that she had never been born, she fell asleep and dreamed a dream. She seemed to see a fair face looking at her tenderly, and to her a soft voice sang, "Good days are coming soon." The remainder of her dream was very confused, and the only thing that dwelt upon her mind when she awoke was the remembrance of a beautiful face and the words, "Good days are coming soon."

The clock struck three on Christmas morning when she awoke in the dark—cold, stiff, and terribly cramped; and striking a match she lit her very last candle, undressed, and crept into bed.

Before she was up there was a knock at her door, and her landlady—a sharp, but by no means bad-hearted, little woman—entered.

"It's near nine o'clock," she said, "and I did not hear you stirring. I just came up with a nice cup of hot coffee, and to wish you a merry Christmas."

Merry Christmas, indeed! What a hollow mockery! However, Linda thankfully accepted the steaming coffee.

Perhaps this was an earnest of better times. And it really proved to be the case; for in turn-

ing over Miss Mee's effects for the twentieth time, to see what she could pawn next, she came upon an old workbox, in the bottom of which was an ancient needle-book.

Linda opened this half in hopes of finding a needle or two, and out fell a piece of carefully folded paper.

She took it up and spread it out before her with trembling fingers.

She could hardly believe her senses. It was a Bank of England note for ten pounds, and in a pocket of this delightful needle-book were three sovereigns and half-a-crown!

What a change in her prospects that shabby little needle-book had effected! Linda rushed downstairs, and, with hysterical joy, told her story to Mrs. Todd—her landlady—and insisted on paying her rent then and there, and giving an order for some dinner on the spot.

"I'll tell you what it is, my dear," said Mrs. Todd, infected by Christmas jollity, the sovereign in her palm, and the girl's eager, worn, excited face, "I'll order no dinner for you at all—you shall dine with us. We have a goose, and a plum-pudding, and port and sherry wine, and oranges, and my cousin from the Edgware-road is coming. He is assistant in a fancy goods shop, and they keep a registry. I'll introduce you, and tell him to book you for something good, and you pay your fee of half-a-crown."

"It's not much good, thank you, Mrs. Todd. I have no reference."

"Well, if I were you I'd have the law of that Mr. Hogg. However, I'll speak up for you if needed; and I'll tell you what, there's nothing speaks so striking for a person as their own appearance, you believe me! If you look shabby you'll be treated shabby. Lay out some of your money in a new bonnet, a pair of gloves, and a fur cape and boots. We will sponge up your best black dress, and you'll see you will be in a really grand place before you know where you are!"

"I am sure I hope so, Mrs. Todd; but not as a governess this time."

"No, a lady's companion. And I'll tell James to pick out some old party as keeps a good cook and a nice carriage!"

"A good cook and a nice carriage!" Linda echoed to herself, as she tottered upstairs. Hitherto Mrs. Todd had taken no interest in her weary searches for a place, and now she had asked her to dinner, and given her advice, and promised her assistance. Why! Was it because she had paid her rent, and because she owned what seemed to her quite a little fortune—twelve pounds and sixpence!

Linda had not much time to speculate, for the bells were ringing merry peals, summoning people to church, and she put on her shabby bonnet and set off.

Her dream of last night seemed to be coming true; good times were dawning, and in the fulness of her heart and her thankfulness the shabby girl, with threadbare jacket and much-mended gloves, placed half-a-crown in the plate, to the intense amazement of the churchwarden who held it.

With Mrs. Todd's advice before her mind's eye she brushed up her best gown, sewed lace ruffles into the neck and sleeves, dressed her hair very carefully, and descended to the dinner-table with some trepidation.

Cousin James was a loud young man, with a shiny face, a frantic check suit, and the reputation of a wit.

He was greatly impressed by this tall, rather silent, and uncommonly pretty girl.

She was not the least like any young woman he had ever met, and did not understand chaff and compliments.

She was fresh—a complete novelty—and she won his respectful admiration before he had spent half-an-hour in her company, and he vowed to his cousin, Mrs. Todd, that she should have the very pick of the basket, in the shape of anything on his books, and she must be sure and look in on him every day. This, he added, with a wink at his cousin.

"None of your nonsense, Jim—you wicked lady-killer," said his relative artfully. "She is a friend of mine."

"And I am honoured to know her. You don't

suppose I'd try any larks on with her! She is like one of the tip-top carriage folk that come after our best double rep notepaper."

In spite of a new and becoming bonnet, a neat fur cape, and a pair of four-shilling gloves; in spite of James Todd's partiality and interest, Linda made no progress beyond a certain point. The rock that invariably wrecked her hopes was called "no references;" but at last, as she was hopelessly leaving the shop one day, an old lady, stout, agitated, and breathless, hurried in headlong, and nearly fell over her.

"Get me a chair, and water, and fan," she said, seizing on Linda. "I'm going off—it's a loose cow!"

As Linda carefully untied her bonnet strings, and picked up her muff, purse, and umbrella, and then fanned her, she explained, in short gasps, that she had left her carriage at the corner, as she wanted to look in at the shop windows, and that an awful cow or bullock had come flying along the street, and frightened every one most terribly, and she had been obliged to run for her life.

"My dear," she said to Linda, "I'm obliged to you. Just tie my bonnet and settle my fringe a bit, and make me look decent. I wish I had some one about me with as neat fingers as you have."

"I wish I was about you," said Linda; "that is, if you want any one like me. I am looking for a situation."

"As what?" glancing at her sharply over her glasses.

"Reader, and ladies' useful companion."

"And have you good references, my dear?"

"No, none!" colouring. "I have only been in one place, and I was sent away, or rather I gave warning, and was sent away."

"That does not sound promising, does it! But truth is best, and I like your face."

"I wish you would try me, if only for a week!" said Linda, amazed at her own hardihood; but it was the boldness of desperation, and her boldness carried the day.

"Come home with me now," said the impulsive old matron. "Come back in my carriage, and tell me all about yourself, and we will see what Sir Thomas says to you," and before Linda could realise her position she was swept away by her patroness, hurried into a well-appointed roomy brougham, and being driven away to be inspected by Sir Thomas, whoever he might be!

(To be continued.)

It is well-known that the growing of oranges is one of the most successful industries established on the Mediterranean border of Palestine. This fruit, known on the market as Jaffa oranges, is of a slightly different shape from the ordinary orange, and is highly prized for its size and excellence. We believe that the "Prince" line of steamers is carrying all the Jaffa oranges to Liverpool this season.

ARABIAN horses manifest remarkable courage in battle. It is said that when a horse of this breed finds himself wounded, and perceives that he will not be able to bear his rider much longer, he quickly retires from the conflict, bearing his master to a place of safety while he has still sufficient strength. But if, on the other hand, the rider is wounded, and falls to the ground, the faithful animal remains beside him, unimpaired of danger, neighing until assistance is brought.

The public speaker can now see in his spectacles what he is to tell his audience—at least, an invention to accomplish this has been made. It consists of a double pair of spectacles. Between the two sets is a pair of tiny rollers, upon which winds a scroll of paper, containing, in minute manuscript form, the speaker's notes on the subject which he is to discuss. The first pair of glasses sufficiently magnifies the handwriting to make it distinct to the speaker's eyes.

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## THE SECRET OF THE MINE.

## CHAPTER V.

DENIS CONNOR awoke to find himself quite a hero in the mining village the next morning; but the private secretary cared for no praises save those of Pauline Stanford. One word from her, or one glance from those starry eyes, went further than all the volumes of praise other people could utter.

There was one person at Castle Royal who heard the story of Connor's bravery with darkening brows—and that was Maurice Fairfax, who had come to the village a few weeks before armed with any amount of credentials as a passport to the favour of Wilfrid Stanford, from personal friends.

Although Mr. Stanford was none too favourably impressed with the dashing style of the young man, being an old friend of the family he could not well help offering young Fairfax the hospitality of his home during the few weeks he intended to remain at the village—an offer Mr. Fairfax hastened to accept, concealing with difficulty the triumphant smile that played about his lips for an instant.

Mr. Stanford did not spend much of his time at home, or he would have noticed the marked attention the handsome stranger paid to Pauline from the very first moment of their introduction.

There was one who noticed it, in great alarm, however, and that was the young private secretary.

At the first glance, these two men who were to be such deadly foes, disliked each other most cordially.

Fairfax saw that the handsome young secretary would have been a most dangerous rival had he been a guest of Pauline's father, instead of a paid dependent.

As for Denis Connor, the first thought that flashed through his mind was,—

"This man is a profligate and a villain! He is dead to honour!"

And his cheeks flushed with anger at the thought of beautiful Pauline being brought in contact with such a person. He wondered why Mr. Stanford, who prided himself upon being such an excellent judge of human nature, could not see by every infallible sign stamped on his face just what he was. His only hope was that Fairfax might become fascinated with either one of the two pretty young girls who were visiting Pauline for a fortnight.

Jessie Bell was a most bewitchingly pretty brunette, quite as fascinating to most men with her loveliness of style as Pauline was with hers. And Ethel Hope, with her piquant face full of lights, and sparkles, and dimples, her turquoise sea-blue eyes and burnished red-gold curls, many declared to be the prettiest of the three girls.

Denis Connor watched Maurice Fairfax anxiously at every opportunity, and his eager eyes soon told him that, although he made himself most charming to both Jessie and the gay, saucy Ethel, he had no eyes for anyone save Pauline.

Just how far he was right in his surmise we will see. On the second day of his stay at Castle Royal, Fairfax wrote a very long and private letter to a sporting friend in London, which read as follows:—

"You are perhaps wondering where I am now, Charlie, old boy. Well, let me give you a brief account up to date. You know when we parted, old boy, I made a vow that you nor none of the rest of the fellows seated around the gaming-table, where I had lost my last penny, should ever see me again until I had struck luck. You know what a deuce of a row I have had to paddle my own canoe since the governor shut down on me, on account of my spendthrift habits, as he phrased it.

"Well, one day, by the merest chance, some one mentioned a girl living out West—an only child, who would inherit all her father's wealth. By dint of much patient inquiry I found out the town where the girl lived. I came here in disguise, and in about a week's time had learned

from outside parties just who her father's friends were in London. Imagine my surprise when I heard my own father named among them. Well, the rest was clear sailing for me. I forged any amount of letters and credentials, and lo! appeared upon the scene a little later in the guise of an English gentleman of leisure.

"The wealthy old gent swallowed the bait, fell into the trap I had laid for him surprisingly easy. I was asked to make his home mine while in the village, and last, but not least, I was soon after brought face to face with the little heiress who is to inherit so many millions.

"Whew! Charlie, but she is a beauty—a regular wild rose! I met, I saw, but I did not conquer, as usual; this time I was conquered. I fell madly in love at first sight. But for the first time in my life I have utterly failed to make an impression. The little beauty seems to be secretly infatuated with her father's private secretary, but a trifle of that kind does not deter Maurice Fairfax from his purpose, as you may well know. Marry her I shall, by fair means or foul, and that too by the time this propitious visit is ended.

"I am terribly short of funds, Charlie, and if you can send me on a £20 or so I should be greatly obliged. If you cannot get that, why fifteen or even ten would do. Do your best for me, Charlie, old fellow, and if I get the heiress, which I swear to you I shall surely do, I will fix you out handsomely for coming to my rescue at this critical time. It's pretty tough making love to a girl without a penny in one's pocket. These girls are always wanting ice-cream and chocolates. Yesterday an Italian organ-grinder and a monkey came up to the gate while I and my charmer, with two of her friends, were in the grounds.

"Oh, just see that dear little monkey! cried all of the girls in a chorus. 'Do see his manoeuvres. Isn't he cute! Oh, look, he is holding out his hand for money. You will have to give him half-a-crown, Mr. Fairfax.'

"Is that all? I asked, with a low bow.

"Just as much more as you like," chorused the three girls.

"Now it so happened that I had the tin top of a champagne bottle in my pocket. I had cut it just the size of a half-crown in a moment of leisure. To end a long story, I tossed him the bit of tin, taking the girls' arms and hurrying them away from the gate. There was an avalanche of yells from the irate organ-grinder as soon as he picked up the supposed coin. He swore all the oaths in the Italian language, as well as all the imprecations in every other tongue which he had picked up. Luckily it was all so much Greek to the girls. I've worked that racket three times now, narrowly escaping detection the last time. I am playing for high stakes.

"Come to my rescue, Charlie, old boy, and you won't lose anything by it. I am going to win the heiress, no matter what stands in the way, and you know whatever I make up my mind to do is as good as accomplished. So send me all you can get hold of to make a show before these girls. Looking eagerly for your reply to this, I remain yours in all kinds of luck, "FAIRFAX"

Mr. Fairfax did not receive the letter he was expecting the fortnight that followed and from that time the servants commenced to miss small sums of money.

Fairfax heard the gardener bewailing the loss of a bank-note one day, and in the adroit conversation he succeeded in having with the man out on the lawn, he quite carelessly managed to throw the suspicion upon the young private secretary without openly accusing him in so many words. And in turn the gardener hesitatingly whispered his fears to the servants of the house.

"Impossible," they declared, one to the other. "Mr. Connor is the soul of honour."

"We will test the matter," said the gardener. "I will mark a bill, and if it disappears I fancy we may be able to trace it."

He gave the idea as emanating from his own rather thick brain, while in truth it was the covert suggestion of Mr. Fairfax.

The affair was to have been carried out on the very night of that thrilling scene at the mine; but the excitement was great the gardener con-

cluded he would wait a week before attempting to put his scheme into execution.

Fairfax's rage knew no bounds to see the private secretary the hero of the hour, the old silver king grasping him by the hand, Miss Bell and pretty Ethel fairly loading him with praises, while Pauline, who stood aloof, was looking at him with a gaze which no rival could mistake or hardly endure.

"I will have to look to my laurels, or this poverty-stricken secretary will carry off the prize before my very eyes," he told himself, grimly.

And looking up suddenly at different times, and seeing the deadly gleam of hate in Fairfax's flashing black eyes, Denis Connor seemed to almost divine the thoughts that were running through his evil brain.

So great was the feeling for the young secretary at Castle Royal, and also in the village, Fairfax dared not say one word against him.

"I will bide my time," he muttered. "Everything comes to those who wait."

But he could scarcely keep his rage in check when, on the day after the mine affair, Pauline informed him that a ride over to Miners' Falls had been planned for the following afternoon, and that Mr. Connor, another young man, and himself were to accompany her two friends and herself on horseback, while Mrs. Peters, as chaperon to the party, would follow in the comfortable brougham.

"I shall be delighted to escort you, Miss Pauline," replied Fairfax, in a low voice, laying special emphasis on the word you.

But at the same time he made up his mind what course he should pursue towards the young secretary on that eventful ride—he should be made to rue the hour he accompanied the party.

## CHAPTER VI.

WILFRID STANFORD, the old silver king, had said to Denis Connor,—

"From this time you shall be treated in this household like one of my own family."

This surpassed the young secretary's wildest dreams; and when Pauline asked him to accompany her friends and herself on their ride to Eagle Rock, or Miners' Falls, as some of the villagers called it, his delight knew no bounds.

"I shall be most happy to go if your father can spare me for that length of time, Miss Pauline," he replied.

"Oh, that will be all right," she answered, quickly. "I have already spoken to him about it, and he says you must go by all means. So you will be sure to be in time, will you not? And pick out the horse you are to ride in the meantime."

"Yes," he answered, painfully embarrassed at the flush he felt creeping over his face.

She left him with a few light, laughing words, and as she turned away hurriedly, a pink rosebud she had worn tucked carelessly in her belt fell to the marble floor, and lay there as she tripped down the corridor.

If she had turned she would have seen Denis Connor stoop suddenly and pick up the flower, and place it in his breast-pocket.

It was hard for the young secretary to sit down to his desk after that; but there were important letters to write, and he bent resolutely to his task, putting Pauline out of his thoughts by a heroic effort.

Quite as soon as his duties were accomplished, he went out toward the stable to select a saddle-horse he was to use, in compliance with Pauline's command.

As he neared the large paddock to the right of the stable, he heard an unusual commotion, and above the din of yelping dogs the sound of Wilfrid Fairfax's loud, boisterous shouts of laughter.

The young secretary hurried forward, and the sight that met his gaze, as well as the sound that fell upon his ears, held him spell-bound, fairly rooted to the spot with anger and intense indignation, making the hot blood fairly boil in his veins.

And this was what he saw: A little ill-shaped, ill-looking mongrel dog which belonged to Pauline, crossing the paddock, closely pursued by a large, ferocious bull-terrier, which Fairfax had set at the mongrel by shouts and yells and deafening clapping of the hands, his loud "Ha! ha! ha!" growing louder each instant as he watched the terror on the face of the ill-looking dog, whose eyes were almost bulging from their sockets as he realized how close he was to the yelping bull-terrier, whose fangs meant instant death if he was overtaken, and his cries of fright were almost human in his awful race for life.

"Catch him, you fool!" shouted Fairfax. "Chew him up!" he yelled, goading on the bull-dog to fresh endeavours. "I'll lash you within an inch of your life if you're not game to the finish."

Denis Connor waited to hear no more. Another instant, and all would be over with the poor, terrified mongrel.

The two dogs must dash past the spot where he stood. Quick as thought he had decided upon his course of action.

Like a flash he cleared the fence, and in that instant of time the two dogs were abreast of him, the mongrel fairly staggering in his frantic efforts to keep in the lead.

Out flew Denis's strong right arm. His aim was a true one. His strong hand, like a band of welded steel, caught the ferocious bull-terrier by the neck with a force that threw the animal back upon its haunches.

A horrible yelp of rage broke from his foaming mouth; his eyes shot fire at being thus baffled of his prey.

The mongrel made good his escape, while the bull-dog made frantic efforts to free himself from that grasp of iron, struggling desperately to bury his fangs in the strong white hand that held him in a vice-like grip.

It all happened in a moment of time, and in that moment Fairfax recovered from the surprise which had overpowered him, and he found his voice.

"Confound your impudence! Drop that dog of mine this instant! What do you mean by interfering in my sport?" he yelled, hoarsely, striding toward the young secretary, fairly livid with passion.

Denis Connor, still holding the dog, who was fast becoming subdued under the force of the master-hand that held him out at arm's-length, turned his cold, steady, stern gray eyes upon the furious man who was approaching, and there was a look in them that cowed Fairfax, despite his pretended bravado.

"No man shall ever set one animal at a weaker one with the intention of destroying it, that its death agonies may afford him coarse amusement, if it be in my power to prevent it!" he declared, warmly. "And I will always defend the weaker while I have an arm to lift!"

Maurice Fairfax was fairly purple with passion. "So!" he cried, tauntingly, "you would pose as a hero again for the benefit of the people of the house. A wonderful stroke of diplomacy on your part, to be sure. If you take the part of the mongrel you must fight its battle!" he ended, with a most horrible laugh, throwing off his coat.

"I am no coward!" said Denis, quietly; and as he spoke he released his hold on the dog, who dashed off toward his kennel with a yelp, despite Fairfax's efforts to call him back.

He had often heard it remarked since Fairfax had been there that he was one of the most powerful athletes in the country; but this did not deter Denis one instant in his resolve to measure strength with him.

He disliked him on general principles, and he determined to give him a sound thrashing if possible.

That very instant of time a general encounter between the two men was warded off for the time being by the appearance on the scene of Pauline and her two girl companions.

"Have you seen anything of my little dog Spurt, Mr. Connor?" she asked, eagerly. "The little rogue ran away from us down the road."

"I saw him run past to the house but a moment since," returned the young secretary, with a low bow, fixing his keen gray eyes upon the confused face of Fairfax.

"Spurt isn't handsome, but I wouldn't lose him for anything in the world," added Miss Stanford. "I am wonderfully attached to him. Why, everyone at Castle Royal owes him a debt of gratitude they couldn't begin to pay. Haven't you heard the story, Mr. Fairfax?"

"No," he stammered.

"Well, it happened in this way. Robbers had secreted themselves in the house, and had chloroformed us all. After securing everything of value which they intended to take off with them to the lawn, they ended by setting fire to the house. Spurt, who belonged to one of the servants, who was in the western wing, discovered the smoke in the house, and barked so vociferously that all the servants were aroused, and in the very nick of time, too. They put out the flames, and saved our lives. From that hour he has been a regular mascot in the family. As I said before, he is a terribly homely little creature, but his weight in diamonds wouldn't buy him from papa or me. Spurt and I are always together. I never go where he is not welcome!"

"Have you selected your horse yet, Mr. Connor?" she said, turning to Denis. "If not I should like to go with you to the stables and give you the benefit of my opinion. Some new thoroughbreds were sent up yesterday. Papa would like very much to try the one I am to use. Are you a good horseman?"

"Fair," he answered. "I have been used to them since I was a lad, and could generally quiet the most vicious animal."

He turned pale, wondering what this wealthy young heiress would think if she realised for an instant that she was talking to a blacksmith's son.

"I will see you later," murmured Fairfax, significantly.

"Won't you accompany us to the stables?" asked Pauline.

"I cannot spare the time just now," returned Fairfax. "I must go to the house and prepare some matters quite as important as a duel," laying particular stress on the last three words.

The girls screamed. Denis Connor met Fairfax's eye unflinchingly, a sarcastic smile creeping to his mouth.

"Do come and help Mr. Connor select a horse," cried Ethel. "I am sure he would appreciate it, wouldn't you, Mr. Connor?"

"I think not," cut in Fairfax, grimly, as he turned away on his heels.

It was not until he found himself alone that Fairfax gave full vent to his pent-up rage.

"I will be even with him before the sun sets," he muttered. "I vow it! I will see how heroic he is."

And striding quickly across the room to his trunk, he raised the lid and took from a secret compartment a brace of revolvers, which he thrust hastily into his hip-pocket, after carefully examining the deadly weapons to see if they were loaded.

This done Fairfax sat down at a table and opened a map of the country out before him, carefully studying the outline of the hills and valleys. He soon discovered that to reach Miners' Falls, on the other side of which was Eagle Rock, they would have to traverse fully five miles of almost perpendicular hills. On one side of the road were mile upon mile of overhanging rocks, which centuries of storms had not as yet toppled from their insecure-looking foundations. On the other side of the road was a deep ravine, at the bottom of which ran a dark, turbulent stream.

"One mishap of the animal Connor rides would prove fatal at that point," mused Fairfax, running his finger over the route.

A few minutes later he was making his way to the stable by a circuitous route, so that no one at the house might see him, to perfect the terrible scheme he was bent upon carrying out.

## CHAPTER VII.

MAURICE FAIRFAX breathed a sigh of relief when he found that Pauline and her girl friends, after inspecting their pets, had left the stable and returned to the house.

The man in charge of the horses touched his hat to Mr. Fairfax, and was about to turn away.

"They tell me, Jim, that you are about to be discharged," said Fairfax.

"That's quite true, sir," returned the man, doggedly. "Mr. Stanford has brought some man on from London, who, he thinks, knows more about horses than I do; but he will find that he is mistaken. I've looked too well after the interests of Mr. Stanford for him to make an enemy of me like this. But it's all that private secretary's doings," ground out the man. "He's been telling him that I neglect the horses. I hate him for his interference! A man who has to work for a living should cover up what another workman does. To make the matter worse, I am dead broke; but these rich people never take anything like that into consideration when they turn one off."

A dangerous smile lighted up Fairfax's face. Nothing could have suited him better than to learn that this man was without money. He would be in his power; for the want of money would lead the man to do anything.

"That is certainly a trying situation. You have good reason to dislike the man, this secretary, who has brought this on you."

"That I have, sir," replied the man, clinching his fists.

"If you saw a way to pay him back, teach him a lesson, would you embrace it, my good fellow? Answer me."

"Would I!" answered the man. "Ah, nothing would suit me better!"

"I will put you to the test," said Fairfax. "I, too, have reason to detest Denis Connor. Follow my directions and you will be one hundred pounds richer before nightfall, with one half of it paid down on the spot."

"What is it that I can do, sir?" asked the man, eagerly.

"The young secretary is to ride the chestnut gelding, Firefly, this afternoon. Now, just before he starts, I want you to fix up a dose of something that will settle his horse in, say, an hour after he has taken it. By that time he will have reached a high, narrow point in the steep road, where it would be fatal to a rider to have an accident happen to his horse."

For a moment the man hesitated. He had always been a simple, honest fellow, and the enormity of the proposed crime almost took his breath away.

"You say you need money," continued Fairfax, smoothly; and as he spoke he drew from his pocket a large roll of crisp notes.

The sight of the money, which he needed so much, influenced the man as no words could have done. He had a wife and little ones almost starving at home. The money this man was holding out to him would give them not only food, but comfort.

"I'll do it!" he said, huskily, turning quickly to his tempter and holding out his hand for the money.

"What a rascal that man is!" thought Jim Armstrong, tightly clutching the money in his hand, and watching Fairfax as he disappeared.

"I never liked the looks of him, despite what all the servants say, that he is to marry Miss Pauline. He is as bad a rascal as I ever knew, and I have seen a good many of them in my day."

He turned and went back into the stable to attend to his duties; but there was something tugging away at his conscience, a feeling which he could not shake off.

Firefly, the handsome, noble horse, whinnied in his stall at the sound of his footsteps. He hesitated, and would have passed silently on but for the whinnying of the animal, who seemed to expect his usual petting.

He took him from his stall and led him out upon the floor, stroking his glossy neck.

"I never liked a horse better," muttered the



man with a sigh. "How different he is from the one in the next stall."

The thought had scarcely passed through his brain ere the black horse toward which his gaze was directed, and who had become unhitched without his being aware of the fact, made a dash toward him. The wild, ungovernable temper of the animal was well known to everyone about the place, and extra care had been taken to secure him. It all happened so quickly that there was no time to cry for help; with a horror too great for words, he saw that the beast was making directly for him. Then followed the maddest pursuit that pen ever portrayed. If he could reach the door he might succeed in flying through it and closing it in the face of the vicious brute.

But in this he had reckoned without his host, and he realised it. Ere he could make the distance the animal's plunging hoofs would be buried in his brain.

There was an open stall to the right of the passage-way. He was too quick for the animal, who dashed past him. The horse's rage, upon seeing himself cheated of his prey, terrified Armstrong, as he watched the horse wheel about in search of him.

With a gasp he gave himself up to his fate—he was cornered in the stall in which he found himself.

He would be like a rat in a trap, with no one near to give him aid, no human being to save him.

One more leap and the maddened animal would land in the stall; but in an instant of time a slight met his gaze which brought a wild cry of hope to his shaken lips. Firefly, the noble animal whose life he had bargained to destroy, had taken in the situation at a glance, and in a bound had reached the stall. Then commenced the most terrible battle Jim Armstrong had ever beheld.

Firefly had come to his rescue. The battle lasted but a moment, which seemed the length of eternity to Armstrong, then he saw that Firefly was victorious. With a snort of rage the black horse beat a retreat. Trembling like an aspen leaf, Jim crept out of the stall and flung himself at the noble animal's feet.

His emotion was so great that he could not utter a single word. But surely the horse knew and understood his gratitude, for he whinnied and capered about like a great playful dog.

When Armstrong walked out of the stable he was a changed man.

"How can I ever do it?" he muttered, closing his hands upon the roll of notes that seemed to burn him. The whinnying of the animal, who seemed to be calling after him, mocked him.

As he entered the front yard he saw his wife sitting on the doorstep of the little cottage, crying, as she rocked herself to and fro with her baby in her arms.

"Poor Jim!" she said, struggling to her feet, "for the first time since we have been wedded you have come home to an empty table and an empty cupboard. There is no dinner; but it isn't my fault, Jim. Baby and I are starving with you."

"No—no, Mary!" he cried, forgetting the resolution that had been in his mind all the way coming home. "You shan't starve. See, I have money in my pocket—plenty of it. There's more to come, too."

He never forgot the cry of joy that broke from her lips as he tossed the roll of notes in her lap.

"Run round to the nearest grocery, Mary," he cried. "I will take care of the little one till you return."

The woman needed no second bidding.

He saw her hurrying down the street, and the sound of her happy laughter floated back to him. Then he realised what he had done—the price he would have to pay for the money he had given his Mary.

So busy was he with his own thoughts that he scarcely heeded the time until she returned, bringing with her a heavily laden basket. In an incredibly short space of time the smoking repast was done and set on the table, and she called him to his dinner will all her old-time cheerfulness. But, hungry as he was, Armstrong

could not eat a mouthful, remembering what was before him.

"Oh, I see what the matter is," exclaimed the woman, "you couldn't wait till you got home, you had something to eat down at the village."

He rose from the table, the half-cupful of coffee he had swallowed had nearly choked him.

"Why do you hurry away from here?" asked Mary, anxiously. "You have an hour for dinner."

"I have some very important work to do," he answered. "The young ladies at Castle Royal, with their escorts, are going out riding at half-past one, and—"

"I must be at the stable to get the animals ready for them."

"I shouldn't be so particular to get there in time if they are going to discharge you as you fear."

He answered not a word, but taking his hat he hurried from the cottage with a troubled look on his face.

When he arrived at the stables Maurice Fairfax was already there waiting for him.

In his hand he held a package.

"This will do the work," he said, hurriedly. "You had better see that it is given to the horse without a moment's delay. Which is the horse—Firefly?"

The map pointed to the stall.

"He certainly showed good taste in his selection," said Fairfax, sarcastically.

"You made your choice first, sir," said Jim Armstrong.

"Oh, I'm not going to back out, I'll ride the horse I said I would ride. I've never seen him, but from your description and information I am sure that I can manage him easily enough. We have no time to lose. But, come, let's attend to this affair on hand and settle Firefly's fate before a whole crowd reaches the stables. Lead the way to the stall."

## CHAPTER VIII.

Trembling in every limb, and with a face as white as it would ever be in death, Jim Armstrong followed Mr. Fairfax into the stable. He had scarcely crossed the threshold ere they heard the sound of footsteps and girlish laughter. With a muttered cry of rage Maurice Fairfax turned sharply, and saw Pauline and her friends hurrying across the lawn.

"Folled!" he cried, sharply, under his breath.

"Here!" he cried, turning hastily to his companion, as he thrust a package into his hand. "I will hold them in conversation at the door for a moment while you perform the deed." A yell of impotent rage burst from his lips. "Heavens!" he cried, "how careless!"

The package had fallen to his feet, and the white powder which the paper contained was scattered in all directions. He did not have an instant's time to vent his wrath upon the man, for Pauline and her friends entered the paddock.

"We were looking for you, Mr. Fairfax," said Pauline. "We have decided to make an earlier start."

He bowed and smiled.

"I am sorry, indeed, to put you to the trouble of having to search for me," he said. "You see there will not be much time wasted, for I am in readiness."

A few moments later they were in their saddles, and little dreaming that two of their number were deadly foes, they set out for Eagle Rock in the best of spirits.

Although Maurice Fairfax did his best to ride by Pauline's side, he found himself forestalled by the young secretary, and he saw, too, that the girl was actually giving him encouragement.

It was with difficulty that he could keep his saddle and his temper, his rage was so great. At last the ascent up the terribly steep grade was made, and the party landed at the summit. Quick as Fairfax was in springing from his horse, the young secretary was quicker, and had already assisted Pauline to alight.

"An upstart for impertinence every time!" muttered Fairfax to himself.

Despite the presence of Fairfax, who did everything in his power to make his rival feel un-

comfortable, Denis Connor spent the happiest two hours of his life. He was in the presence of the girl he loved; she was talking with him—nay, smiling upon him. He forgot that he was only an humble blacksmith's son, and she a great heiress, until a remark of his rival brought him to his senses.

"They say this charming spot is for sale!" exclaimed Fairfax. "I should like someone to buy it with me in shares. If I were to invest five thousand pounds here, would you put in a like amount, Mr. Connor?"

Denis could feel the intended sneer in the words. He had not five thousand pounds at his command in all the wide world, let alone as many pounds; but in an instant of time the hot blood rushed back to his cheeks—he had gained his self-composure.

"I would not make such an investment under any consideration," he said; "it would be against my judgment. I would rather give that much to the hungry who are crying for bread."

"What a noble sentiment, Mr. Connor!" cried Ethel Hope.

Fairfax bit his lip. The shaft that he had pointed at his rival had fallen harmlessly at his feet.

"I echo Ethel's sentiments," said Pauline. "I hear that they could not give this land up here away, it is so inaccessible. Besides, it is almost barren."

At that moment they heard the sound of voices.

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A number of picnickers were coming to Eagle Rock from another direction.

"Dear me!" cried Pauline, "it seems that we have chosen the wrong day for our trip here."

By this time, however, the excursionists were so near that they could distinguish their faces.

Then Pauline found, much to her relief, that it was a party of young folks from the neighbouring village whom she knew well. They were so delighted to see Pauline and her friends that they pressed them to remain, and as they could not very well refuse, the offer to spend the day with them was accepted.

The servants brought the heavily-laden baskets up the steep incline, and the odour of their contents was delightfully appetising to Pauline and her friends, whose long ride had given them excellent appetites.

"Do let us stay!" cried Ethel, Jessie Bell echoing her request.

Pauline turned to Denis Connor.

"I think we may as well remain," she said. "Don't you think so?"

"Yes," he agreed. But he said to himself that one was never so much alone as in a crowd. He would have more of an opportunity to talk to Pauline alone.

There were so many young gentlemen of her acquaintance present that at first he almost despaired of interesting her any further. But when she turned to him, as if to challenge him to take part in the conversation of those who came up to her, a sigh of relief welled up unconsciously from his heart to his lips.

He had read and studied a great deal, and was therefore familiar with every subject that Pauline and her friends discussed, and he talked with a vigour that astonished even himself.

Eagle Rock was over a mile in length and almost half as wide. There were charming little grottoes in it, great bushes that were almost trees grew out of its fissures, and beautiful flowery vines that seemed almost out of place in such a barren waste.

Pauline signified a determination to explore it, and was only too delighted to wander away from the chatter of girlish voices with Denis by her side.

No one noticed their absence, as the merry dance-music had struck up, and in the mass of the waits no one thought of them; even Maurice Fairfax did not miss them.

Denis found himself by Pauline's side, and what was more, he realised that she was talking to him in her graceful, girlish fashion, and her presence was casting a spell over him such as he was powerless to resist. Once, as the path was rather steep, he involuntarily held out his hand to assist her, and to his surprise she accepted his aid and thanked him.

They walked on slowly together, the lovely sunshine about them, and the song of the birds in their ears.

For a few moments there was silence between them.

"I wish I knew of what you are thinking, Miss Pauline," he said, "you look at me so intently."

He saw the beautiful, dark face flush. He looked so in earnest, so handsome, that in her own mind she thought this man, who was only her father's secretary, was worth a thousand of the white-handed aristocrats whom she was accustomed to meet. A great respect for him was creeping into her heart. She admired his bravery, his truthfulness, and his chivalrous, simple notions.

"I was just wondering if—if a rumour which is circulating in the village about you is true!" she asked, slowly.

His hands fell heavily to his side and his face blanched. Had someone found out the secret which he had guarded so carefully—the story of his origin—of which he was so ashamed!

He had dreaded so much lest it should ever be known that he was but the son of a poor, ignorant blacksmith.

He knew that it was a dishonourable weakness, and he hated himself for it; but he was powerless to combat the feeling. He looked the question which he dared not put into words.

"Some one said," began Pauline, softly, "that

you are only masquerading among us, Mr. Connor—that you are the son of a wealthy man who cut you off because you insisted upon making your living in the world."

The colour swept back to his face. Ah, thank Heaven! she did not know the truth.

"They say many things which are true and many which are not," he replied. "I—I shall have only the fortune which I make myself," and he laughed in a slow, painful fashion which puzzled her.

"What amuses you?" she asked, wonderingly.

"There is a good deal of satisfaction in hearing people speak well of your parentage rather than ill."

"That is certainly true," she assented.

"If they had said that I came from a very humble family, it would not have pleased you so well?" he said, hesitatingly.

"No," she replied, frankly. "As it is, I am pleased to know that you are my equal socially, Mr. Connor."

"Then you do not believe a man can be a gentleman who was born poor?" he inquired, eagerly.

"No," she answered, thoughtfully; "the training which makes gentlemen begins with their grandfathers. It takes a generation of training at least; that is what our teachers used to tell us at school."

And those words seemed to raise a barrier between them which, he said to himself, he could never break down.

He said to himself that now was the time to tell her all. He detested himself because his heart ached from the ordeal. The force of his love had conquered him and left him powerless to cope with it.

"Fate is against me," he murmured. "Every hour I fall deeper and deeper into the gulf, and no power can save me."

"We have wandered quite away from the rest," said Pauline; "perhaps we had better return."

"Stay just a few moments longer," he pleaded.

He did not tell her that the thought was passing through his mind that he might never be alone with her again, and that the present was like a dream of heaven to him.

Silence fell upon them as the words died on his lips.

"This is a day in my life that I shall never forget," he said, slowly, "because it is the happiest I have ever known."

Pauline's heart was stirred by his words. The lovely bloom on her face came and went, and she trembled.

What was happening to her, she wondered! What was this new sweetness that stirred her very soul! Her silence and her blushes surprised even himself, and encouraged him to speak further.

"I am going to tell you something, Pauline," he said. "I wonder if this day will bring to me an eternity of happiness, or—prove a curse!"

(To be continued.)

THE natives of Gibraltar have a tradition that somewhere on the rock there exists a cavern whence a subterranean passage leads under the Strait to the mountains on the other side. The existence of this passage, they say, is known to the monkeys, who regularly use it in passing from one continent to the other.

BREATHING is an art. We ought to take in fourteen pints of air per minute. At the usual rate of breathing we do so. But if we get into a rarified atmosphere, we take in at the usual rate of breathing less than the fourteen pints. Sedentary people can get all the advantages to health of a long walk or other exercise by simply increasing the rate of breathing during one or two hours a day, thus adding to the amount of oxygen that enters the lungs.

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# FAÇETTES.

"THE verb to love!" says a wicked French writer, "is an active verb, which runs until it sinks exhausted into the easy-chair of marriage."

"ALMOST any man will admit that he's liable to make mistakes." "Yes; except when he makes them."

"WHAT do you do when your wife has a headache, Beverly?" "I take home a couple of theatre tickets."

PAT: "They do say the car next the injune be the most dangerous." Mike: "Begorra, then why don't they lave it off."

"YOUR husband seems to be a victim of the tobacco habit." "No, I'm the victim. He thoroughly enjoys it."

HE: "How the baby cries! It's terribly distracting." SHE: "I guess I'll have to sing it to sleep." He (hurriedly): "No, no! Let it cry."

"WHAT's the matter with Lizzie Casey?" She acts stuck up." "Ain't ye heard! Why, her brother just got sixty days for assaulting a policeman."

MISS QUIZZER: "Do you believe all the disagreeable things you read in the newspapers?" Miss BUBBUS: "I do, if they're about people I know."

ANXIOUS MOTHER: "I don't understand how it is, Bertie, that you are always at the bottom of your class." Bertie: "I don't understand it myself; but I know it's dreadful easy."

BROWN: "Here is some tobacco, my poor man. You must feel the loss of a smoke after dinner." "No, sir; I feel the loss of my dinner before the smoke."

A LITTLE girl in town said, the other day, "Oh, grandmother, don't make me two dresses just alike; I'm afraid people will think I'm twins."

CHOLLIN: "Have a drink, old chap?" Chapple: "I have sworn off." "Well, a cigar, then!" "Have stopped smoking." "When is the marriage to take place?"

PINTER: "She is not only a fine-looking girl, but they say she has a fortune in her own right. What would you do if you had a wife like that?" MINTER: "Nothing!"

A TEACHER, observing one boy coming in late, said to him: "Now, then, sir, what are you late for?" "School, sir," answered the lad, quietly taking his seat among the remaining boys.

"Do you know a good tonic for nervous persons, Simpkins?" "No; what I want to find is a good tonic for people who have to live with them!"

DOLER: "Are you troubled with the toothache?" Moler (in agony): "Great Caesar! Did you ever know a person to have the toothache without being troubled with it?"

TOMMY: "Mother, what is an angel?" Mother: "An angel is a being that flies." Tommy: "But, mamma, papa calls my governess an angel." Mother: "Then, my dear, she is going to fly immediately!"

SHE: "I hear that you have lost your valuable dog, Mr. Dudley." He: "Yes; in a railway accident. I was saved, but the dawg was killed." She (shocked): "Goodness! What a pity!"

"I HOPE you appreciate the fact, sir, that in marrying my daughter you marry a large-hearted, generous girl!" "I do, sir"—with emotion—"and I hope she inherits these qualities from her father."

MISTRESS: "Bridget, you've broken as much china this month as your wages amount to. Now, how can we prevent this occurring again?" Bridget: "I'm sure I don't know, mum, unless you raise my wages."

"MISS PASSBROUGH has had exceptional social advantages," said one young woman. "She has been presented to the Queen." "It's strange that I never heard of it!" replied the other. "Oh, she never mentions it. You see, it occurred so soon after her Majesty's coronation."

"I WONDER," said the fair-haired maid, "if there will be any more love when woman is the acknowledged peer of man in intellect?" "What," asked the rheumatic bachelor, "has love got to do with intellect?"

"HERE'S an account of a Colorado girl, who climbed to the top of Mount Popocatepetl, and sang 'The Star Spangled Banner.'" "She had some sense, didn't she? It's too bad some other girls are not as thoughtful when they want to sing."

MRS. MCINTY: "An' phwat did th' doctor say wot th' matter wid y'r eye, Patay?" Small Son: "He say-ed thur was some foreign substance in it." Mrs. McInty (with an "I told you so" air): "Now maybe ye'll kape away from thim Eytalians."

ROSS: "And so you've not had much sport to-day, Mr. Murphy? And you look terribly blood-thirsty, too!" Murphy (gallantly): "Sure now, Miss Ross, and if I only looked as killing as you do, it's a big bag I'd have at the end of the day without firing a shot!"

"THIS," said the school friend who had not seen her for a year, "this is the girl who vowed to me that she never would belong to any man—eh?" "I don't," said she who had been married the matter of some few months or so. "He belongs to me."

MRS. DUN: "I wish I could think of something to give my husband on his birthday." Mrs. Sharp: "I never have any bother with mine. I always give him a scarf-pin." "I don't think I ever saw him wearing one." "No; he hates the things, so I always get him to have them made into rings for me."

"ANY letter for me?" asked a young lady of a post-mistress in a country town. "No," was the reply. "Strange!" said the young lady, aloud, to herself, as she turned away. "Nothing strange about it!" cried the postmistress over the counter. "You ain't answered the last letter he writ ye."

THE Rev. Dr. Thirdly: "And now, children, I wonder if any little boy or girl here knows who was the best man that ever lived. Ah! there's a hand up. Well, Johnny, who was the best man that ever lived?" Johnny Secondorop: "Please, sir, it was mamma's first husband, sir."

AN Irish servant, sweeping out a bachelor's room, found a sixpence and carried it to the owner. "You may keep it for your honesty," said he. A short time after he missed his gold pencil-case and inquired of his servant if he had seen it. "Yes, sir," was the reply. "And what have you done with it?" "Kept it for my honesty."

SOME children were trespassing in a field, and quite happily gathering flowers together. Presently a keeper came up to them, saying, angrily: "Now, then, what business have you to be in here? Didn't you see the notice at the gate?" "Oh, yes, please, sir," answered one little girl. "We saw the notice, but it had 'Private' on it, so we didn't like to read any more."

MISS GOODIE: "I think those South Sea heathens are simply horrid." Old Lady: "Yes; my nephew was a missionary among them, and he used to write me letters telling about them." Miss Goodie: "Oh, how perfectly interesting! How did they serve him?" Old Lady (innocently): "Roasted, I think; but it may have been boiled. It was a long time ago, and my information came second-hand."

A STORY is told of a well known peer, who is a very bad shot: Not long ago he was on the Scotch moors, and, having unsuccessfully fired at a covey of birds that rose not more than twenty yards ahead, he exclaimed, "It is strange that none of them fell! I'm positive that some of them must have been struck!" "I dinna doot," returned the keeper, with the usual freedom of his class, "that they were struck wi' astonishment at gettin' off as easy!"

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## SOCIETY.

THE Prince of Wales will spend a few days at Iwerne Minster, in November, as the guest of Lord Wolverton.

THE Danish Royal family pass the mornings at home, either in the gardens or in the library or music-room, and in the afternoon there is always a long drive in the beautiful forests which lie round the Bernstorff domain.

THE Prince of Wales will go to Denmark, where he will join the Princess and Princess Victoria, and Prince and Princess Charles of Denmark. The Emperor and Empress of Russia will probably be there then also, and family affairs of much importance are to be discussed.

THE Osborne is to lie in the roads at Copenhagen until the beginning of October, when she will convey the Princess of Wales to Aberdeen, as Her Royal Highness is to pay brief visits to the Queen at Balmoral and to the Duke and Duchess of Fife at Mar Lodge, before going to Sandringham for the winter.

THE Duke and Duchess of Connaught will be away from Bagshot Park during September and October. They will go direct to Homburg, as the Duke has been specially invited by the Emperor William to attend the German autumn manoeuvres. The Duke and Duchess will afterwards pay some visits in Germany and Hungary, and are to spend the last fortnight of October with the Queen at Balmoral.

THE Princess of Wales and Princess Charles of Denmark have taken to playing croquet a great deal; Princess Victoria, too, is fond of the game. The Princess and her daughters walk, cycle, fish, and go for expeditions, wearing always the neatest and most immaculate of tailor-built coats and skirts made by the inimitable Redfern, while with blouses they supply themselves very variously to suit various weathers and pursuits.

THE young Queen of Holland has recently entered upon her eighteenth year. The news of her betrothal is expected at the European Courts; but the youthful monarch herself is, it is stated, most anxious to make no choice until she is older. She is a very quiet girl, clever and observant, trained most carefully to her great position by her mother, and singularly simple, yet dignified, in manner.

It is believed that the young Duke of Albany will enter Eton College next term—viz., Michaelmas, and will be sent to Mr. Austen Leigh's house, where his cousin, Prince Arthur of Connaught, now is. Going up a year later than the last-named Prince, the Duke of Albany will naturally take a lower form, but, except in that particular, the two youthful Royalties will be able to be constant companions—if they wish. In the main the training and treatment of English Princes at Eton are the same as in the case of other students, but there are certain special arrangements made as to their quarters and their meals which suffice to give for them a distinctive position.

THE German Empress has taken an immense fancy to the siber, which is so popular with the peasants in the Bavarian Tyrol.

THE same rooms were occupied by the Kaiser on his recent visit to Russia as on his previous visit nine years ago; they form a particularly handsome suite, as will readily be imagined. Three drawing or reception rooms in blue, violet, and fawn respectively, lead to the Kaiser's study. This room is comparatively simple, but elegant in its arrangements; the walls are hung with pale blue and white silk damask adorned with fine sea paintings by Tivarsowsky. His Majesty's sleeping apartment adjoining is upholstered in ivory moiré antique, the large square bed, of Empire style, with heavy damask curtains, standing in an alcove. A door of mirror glass, framed artistically in white china, leads to the room, which was used as a boudoir by the Kaiserin. This was one of the most charming rooms of the whole suite, furnished in rococo style, with an abundance of mirrors, and hung with pale pink silk embroidered with cheerful little bouquets.

## STATISTICS.

OVER 1,000,000 pawntickets for sums under 10s. are issued weekly in London alone.

THE average person is supposed to speak about 12,000 words a day.

MECHANICS head the list of inventors, clergy-men next.

ON an average each Englishman writes 40 letters a year, each Scotchman 30, and each Irishman 15. The average Italian only posts 6, and the American 21.

ABOUT 21,000 people sleep nightly aboard the steamers on the Thames. During the Henley Regatta over 5,000 people were accommodated in the house boats every night.

STATISTICS show that of 10,000 smoke-stacks in this country only three are struck by lightning each year; while of 10,000 church spires, 67, and of 10,000 windmills, 89 are struck by lightning annually.

## GEMS.

THE failures of life come from resting in good intentions, which are in vain unless carried out in wise action.

ONLY the wise can profit by the experience of others. A fool has to find out for himself what fire is.

IT is not by turning over libraries, but by repeatedly perusing and intently contemplating a few great models, that the mind is best disciplined.

THE world owes a debt unpayable of reverence and gratitude for the obscure fidelity and unchronicled sacrifice, the silent and steady toil which had no other inducement than a sense of duty and the reward of an approving conscience.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

POTAGE NIVERNAISE.—Cut out some new carrots into the shape of small olives, and toss them in butter with a sprinkling of castor sugar, and pepper and salt to taste; then let them finish cooking in a small quantity of stock. Boil the carrot trimmings in as much clear, well-flavoured stock as will be wanted for stock for about half an hour, then strain into the soup-tureen, add the cut carrots, and serve.

LETTUCE SANDWICH.—Boil eggs till they are crumbly, and chop them fine and season with salt and pepper. Get nice tender lettuce and pick it to finest shreds with the fingers. It ruins lettuce to chop it with steel. Mix egg and lettuce evenly, spread daintily on thin slices of buttered bread, and drop over it some nice salad dressing, then cover with another thin slice of buttered bread. Always make sandwiches very thin.

EGG SAUCE.—Put a quarter-pound of butter into a stewpan with half a pint of water and a pinch of sugar, and when boiling stir in very quickly a quarter of a pound of flour. Stir over the fire till well cooked, which will easily be discernible when the paste will leave the sides of the stewpan quite free. Now add, one at a time, four eggs, and also a little essence of any sort. Put a plain pipe into a bag, and force out the mixture out to greased tin in finger shape, about three inches long, and bake in a quick oven. When cooked, make at the end of each eclair a small hole, and fill it with trappans, or whipped cream. Prepare some chocolate, coffee, rose, or kirsch fendant, and after spreading a little well-reduced apricot jam on the top of each eclair, dip it into any of the desired icing.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

DURING the last year or two many tons of hair have been packed between the plates of certain parts of war vessels. Hair is very elastic, and thus affords a most effective backing in metal.

SHANGHAI is being rapidly changed into a manufacturing town. Cotton factories are springing up in every direction, and the Chinese have the novel experience of smoke and screaming whistles.

THE flags to be hoisted at one time in signalling at sea never exceed four. It is an interesting arithmetical fact that with eighteen variously-coloured flags, and never more than four at a time, no fewer than 73,642 signals can be given.

ACCORDING to a recent lecture by a well-known scientist, the safest course for a human being in a thunderstorm is to get thoroughly wet. If there be no rain this immunity may be gained by jumping into a pond or horse-trough.

A NEW idea in road-maps for cyclists consists in printing the outline of the route on a long strip of paper, which is wound on two drums in front of the rider, and may be operated by a thumb-wheel on one of the drums.

THE chief waste of power in walking comes in supporting the body and in friction when the foot strikes the ground. Human muscle is exhausted almost, if not quite as much, by supporting a weight as by moving it, and standing still is a very tiring task.

BEEES work at night in the hive, building their combs as perfectly as if an electric light shone there all the time. The existence of the young depends on the liquidity of the saccharine food presented to them, and if light were allowed access to this, it would, in all probability, prove fatal to the inmates of the hive.

A METHOD has been invented of telephoning to and from moving trains. It is simply a novel form of brush contact on the end of a pole, by means of which the telephone in the train can be connected to the wire along the line, which supplies electricity to light the cars which run on the New York and Brooklyn Bridge.

TO carry an extra person on a bicycle a man has invented a device consisting of a seat attached to a bar projecting from the centre brace out in front of the head. The seat is placed a little to one side, and a dress-guard and foot-rest extend down near the ground on the other side.

A GERMAN naval captain has invented a new lifebuoy. It consists of a large cork ring, capable of floating three persons, and provided with a kind of net, which offers a support to the feet. Its principal feature, however, is that it is fitted with an electric light and a small supply of provisions.

THE barber of India has no shop, and does not solicit customers by signs or symbols. He visits certain families regularly every morning early. For his daily services he receives three shillings a month. A single shave costs one half-penny, and the charge for hair-cutting is one penny to twopence.

THE guinea got its name from the coast of Guinea in Africa, whence the gold for it was first brought. It was first 20s., then 21s. 6d., and finally 21s. "Shilling" and "penny" are both Saxon words, and the penny was first coined in silver. Farthing is a corruption of "fourthing," or the fourth of a penny.

THIS sixtieth year of Her Majesty's reign is also the 360th anniversary of the death of King Henry VIII. In the 350 years which have passed since then fifteen sovereigns and Oliver Cromwell have reigned over this country, three of them—Queen Elizabeth, Queen Victoria and George III.—have monopolised half the time.

THEY have a novel way in Italy of advertising vacant apartments. In place of the placard inscribed "Rooms to Let," or "To be Let," which adorns our windows, a white cloth, about the size of a napkin, butters from the easement, notifying the passers-by that the apartments can be rented.



# NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**JOHN.**—Nottingham is a city.

**WILLIE.**—It is entirely your own fault.

**P. T.**—There is no legal obligation to do so.

**HELEN.**—The notice appears to be sufficient.

**FRANK.**—You would not be liable for her maintenance.

**J. C.**—They cannot be prevented, but can be squeezed out.

**WILHELM.**—A fathom is a measure of depth equal to six feet.

**IN DISTRESS.**—You will require the assistance of a lawyer.

**M. O.**—You might try soft soap mixed with diluted citric acid.

**QUEENIE.**—The height of her Majesty the Queen is five feet two inches.

**STUDENT.**—The most likely place would be some second-hand book stall.

**SEA BORN.**—A child born on the high seas takes the nationality of the parents.

**SCILLA.**—You will find a list of members of Parliament in "Whitaker's Almanack."

**POVERTY.**—The parents must provide their children with the necessary school materials.

**ANXIOUS FRIEND.**—She cannot legally re-marry until she has proof of her husband's death.

**TROUBLED ANNE.**—A married daughter is not liable to contribute towards her mother's support.

**JOCK.**—Impossible without machinery, which would be too expensive for merely "home work."

**LYDIE.**—It is a very difficult job to do at all nicely; by far the best way is to entrust it to a hatter.

**IN NEED OF ADVICE.**—Of course you should not marry a man who is in the habit of getting intoxicated.

**ADONIAH.**—There are dozens of such preparations; we have no knowledge of the one in which you refer.

**OLD MAID.**—Older women than you have entered the holy state; still, there is no reproach in the term "old maid."

**ROSEMARIE.**—The English language is derived from many sources, the chief of which are Anglo-Saxon and Norman-French.

**DESKINER.**—If your hair, tongue or feet be cooled in the water in which it was boiled, it will be found much more tender and juicy.

**BABY.**—The parents of these under age can interfere to prevent them being married by giving notice to the clergyman or registrar.

**H. U.**—The best thing for you to do would be to study some good books, of which there are a great many written upon that very subject.

**MINDIE.**—If you have received no suitable education, you must enter as cabin-boy or landsman on board a merchantman, and work your way, rough and smooth.

**V. Q.**—The Victoria Cross is made of brass. In the case of private and non-commissioned officers only, it carries a pension of £10, with £5 additional for each bar.

**BEATIE.**—Notice must be given to the registrar in both districts, and one of the parties must reside for a term in the district where the marriage is to take place.

**DEBILITATED.**—We are afraid you are too old to derive any benefit from the remedy for knock-knees. No harm can come from your persevering with the treatment.

**SUFFERER.**—An old and good remedy for nervous headache which is felt at the base of the brain is camphor. It is most effective when applied to the part and rubbed for a few minutes.

**ONE IN TROUBLE.**—You cannot compel the medical man to send in his bill at request; but you cannot, unless you dispute its correctness, refuse to pay the charge when he does send it in.

**MADAME.**—Beat together one ounce of clear honey, one ounce of almond oil, the juice of a lemon, and the yolk of a raw egg. Apply at night to the hands, and cover with old gloves all across the palms.

**H. R. B.**—They grow luxuriantly wherever they are permitted to find a foothold, and are very prolific in the way of seed, which when ripe, are so light, that they rise in the air and float away on a very breeze.

**INFORMANT.**—The bass is the lowest male voice. The baritone is the medium male voice between the bass and the tenor; in the same manner as the mezzo-soprano is the medium female voice between the soprano and contralto.

**MILDER SHIRAZ.**—Perhaps the best way would be to make application in advance of season of the summer hotels for positions as waiters in the dining rooms; then by the most palatable, serviceable and pleasant and good pay.

**AMBITIOUS.**—Give special attention to reading for information, and to acquiring knowledge on all general topics. It is a good plan to take up some special subject and make yourself an expert. There is always a demand for thorough knowledge on any given topic.

**TOMATO.**—There are many ways in which tomatoes may be used. They may be baked, plain or stuffed, fried, broiled, devilled, scalloped, curried, creamed, and combined with other vegetables in a variety that is charming and bewildering to those who have only eaten them sliced, raw, stewed, or in soup.

**NON-TALKATIVE.**—The ability to make good conversation, or to carry it on when others make it, is very seldom met with. It is almost as rare as that other valuable talent, good judgment. But there is a great difference between being able to "talk" and to carry on a conversation.

**AWKWARD.**—You would do well to not try and reduce your waist by tight lacing. You will destroy your anatomy, sacrifice your natural litheness and grace, and ruin your complexion. Take plenty of exercise, wear sensible, comfortable clothes, and eat heartily, is sound advice for a girl of your age.

**J. A. D.**—Ores are pulverised then put in water and the mercury is added. The silver is stirred, when the mercury attracts the silver to itself and leaves the dirt free from the metal. Then the silver is extracted from the mercury, and a perfectly pure metal may be obtained.

**NURSE.**—When perfumes are not disagreeable to a patient, it is well to use them freely in a sick room, as they are a protection against contagion. It is said that if lavender-water is sprayed through the living rooms of houses situated in a malarial locality, it will prevent the occupants from contracting the disease.

## REGRET.

There's a spectre to-night in my lone little room  
That never has been here before.  
A figure that stands in the dusk and the gloom  
And murmurs a name o'er and o'er.  
Midst all the dim phantoms that nightly fit in,  
That rob me of power to forget,  
Gay impulse, crushed Conscience or gaunt visaged Sin,  
This one has never visited in yet.  
But now, in the doorway, with poor empty hands,  
And eyes moist with unshed tears,  
Regret comes at last and there timidly stands  
And points down the sad waste of years.  
I thought in my blindness to bar out this guest  
For ever away from my heart;  
To revel in pleasure, to seek amusement,  
To mock at the bruised Conscience smart.

When lo! To my chamber so softly it came,  
I heard not a sound of approach  
Until like a saphy, it murmured a name  
In a voice, with a sigh of reproach,  
That name, oh, my darling! I thought to forget  
In the years that would find us apart,  
And here, at its mention, my cheeks are all wet,  
And the bars fallen down from my heart.

Regret, whither come with your eyes streaming  
Tears?  
Oh, why do ye haunt me so late?  
There's a mountain of follies, a desert of years,  
Twixt me and my Eden's fair gate.

**PUR.**—Hold the parts affected in the steam proceeding from the spout of a boiling tea kettle, but not too near the spout, only sufficient for the steam slightly to moisten the spots, then with a clean, rather soft brush brush up the nap in the right direction. Before you use the brush it ought to be well washed and thoroughly dried.

**S. M.**—China took its name from Tsin, an emperor who founded a dynasty three hundred years before the Christian era. He was the monarch who built the Great Wall and accomplished many other works of utility to the empire. It is also called the "Celestial Empire," because most of its rulers claimed to be of heavenly descent.

**NAN.**—It is uncomfortable and undignified for a man to prance from one side to the other simply because he finds himself on the side farthest from the curbstone. At evening he need not change at all if the lady has taken his arm. It is the very essence of good breeding to do whatever comes in one's way quietly and with as little fuss and parade as possible.

**HARRY.**—Take one quart of rich milk, four tablespoonfuls of corn-starch, dissolve in one cupful of the milk with three tablespoonfuls of sugar. When the milk begins to boil, stir in the mixture, and as it thickens, beat in lightly two cupfuls of coconut. Put in moulds on ice. Serve with cream and sugar. A little yellow orange peel may be cooked in the milk for a flavour. Take out before cooling.

**DICK.**—When a prisoner of war is put upon his parole, either that he will not go beyond certain designated limits, or that he be allowed to return home he will not fight again during the existing war, it is understood that his sense of honour is relied upon not to break it. If he break it he can expect no quarter from the enemy, for he will have forfeited all claim to be treated as an officer or a gentleman.

**DIAGON.**—Although only supposed to be taken with meat, it is excellent with cold game or poultry, and also with fish, and croquettes of fish, meat, &c. The simplest and best way of making it is to grate the root of horseradish, and to mix with it a little milk, a pinch of sugar, and a gill of cream slightly whisked, and about a tablespoonful of white vinegar. The sauce should be stirred till it is quite smooth.

**BABE.**—The best way to clean your boiler is to give it inside a good coat of dripping or kitchen fat, then fill up with water containing a fair portion of soft soap and soda, and boil for some time; rub the boiler, run out the water, and wipe dry; it should then be clean, but for safety it may be as well to put the first clothes in a linen bag lest there should be some spots of rust overlooked.

**C. M.**—Declaring intention to become American citizens is of little avail if the parties have not resided long enough in the States to qualify for naturalisation; the declarator cannot help them with the emigration officers, who would refuse to pass them should they seem incapable of maintaining themselves, which is really the chief thing on which objections to emigrants is based.

**A LOVER OF THE "LONDON READER."**—The period for wearing mourning for deceased relatives is by no means definite, and seldom extends to the length it formerly did. Many persons put off their mourning for any relative, more distant than husband or wife, at the end of three months, while others consider it right to wear it twelve for a parent. It is entirely regulated by the feelings of the parties themselves.

**MILIE.**—Three tablespoonfuls starch, one tea cup cold water, one teaspoonful borax, one dessert spoonful turpentine, half teaspoonful boiling water, mix all together smoothly, have the breast and cuffs wet, wash them in the starch; wring, clap, and roll up; iron the shirt, then have a little cold water in a bowl, put in a few drops of glycerine essence, it runs over this with a damped, and apply a hot polishing iron, and there will be a fine glass.

**WOULD-BE ACTOR.**—Where a man has a natural adaptability for the stage—a fine, graceful figure, a strong, melodious voice, an expressive face, and sufficient education to enable him to make use of his natural powers—he may in five or ten years from his adoption of the profession of an actor be in receipt of a fair salary; but with as hard work and study in any other profession he would have been in much better circumstances.

**ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.**—The saying "Hobson's Choice" originated in England many years ago. Tobias Hobson was the first man to let out carriage horses. When people came to his stable for a horse, while there were a great many horses from which to choose, Hobson insisted that each take the horse which stood nearest the stable door, so that every customer was forced alike according to his chance. From this it became a proverb when one choice was forced, to call it "Hobson's choice."

**DARTY MAM.**—Do not run to extremes or ride hobbies. If you know of some one who has made a success in dairying, go there for advice, but do not take counsel from those whose information is based on failures. Learn to take care of one or two cows before you take more on your hands. Remember that the prime factor in dairying is cleanliness, and that accuracy in keeping account of your incomes and outgoes is of the greatest consequence, and that without this you can never tell precisely where you stand.

**JOE.**—This recipe will, we think, suit your purpose. Slice a pint of ripe tomatoes, and boil for three quarters of an hour with a small piece of chili. Press through a hair sieve and boil up again, with pepper, allspice, pounded cloves, ground ginger, mace, and salt to taste. When cold, stir in two or three tablespoonfuls of mustard worked into a smooth paste with vinegar, add the same quantity of curry powder and enough vinegar to make all the consistency of made mustard, then bottle for use. It would not do to give exact quantities of spices this recipe, for tastes vary so much, and some like a larger quantity of one spice than another, &c. This sauce will be found delicious with cold meat.

**MAVIE.**—There is only one way of thoroughly cleaning new feathers—mix one pound of quicklime (sifted from shell, but not mixed for building) in one gallon water, stir thoroughly and let settle, then pour off the clear water for use; put feathers into a clean tub, pour the water over them and stir till feathers have all sunk and are three inches under surface; leave them so for three or four days, then take out, drain in a sieve, and rinse thoroughly in clean water; spread in cabbage net to dry, shaking the net daily and gathering up the feathers that fall; when all are dried, beat them well to get rid of dust; in three weeks to cleanse enough feathers for a bed; many people content themselves with exposing the feathers on a sheet on the grass under the sun, turning them frequently for several days.

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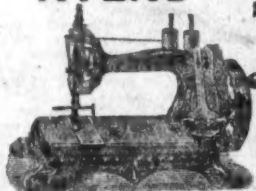
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